

# **IMAGINARY CREATURE**

**Empowering experiences with the girls of Balika Peace Home in Nepal  
through an art-based workshop**

Maria Taka

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Diaconia University of Applied Sciences

Degree Programme in Social Services

Option in Diaconal Social Work

Bachelor of Social Services (UAS) +

Qualification for the office of diaconia

worker in the Church of Finland

## ABSTRACT

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The development-oriented thesis illustrates the workshop project implemented in Nepal in a girls' community, Balika Peace Home, and reports the implementation and assessment of the results. The aim was to support community spirit and to apply methods that enable strengthening one's own identity, which is one way for better self-perception and self-confidence. The Imaginary Creature workshop utilised creative, art-based methods to enable empowering experiences for the participants. The chosen theoretical frame enables to describe the meaning of the utilised methods and illumines spiritual and diaconal aspects.

The participants in the workshop are fostered in Balika Peace Home, which is maintained by a Nepalese, non-governmental organisation CWIN. Cultural aspects of females in Nepal are outlined in the thesis.

The gathered material consisted of the workshop outputs made by the participants in different phases of the workshop, as drawings, stories and hand-made characters utilising recycled materials. These were complemented with photos, notes of participatory observation, informal interviews with workers of CWIN and participants of the workshop including volunteers.

The plan of the workshop included three phases allowing the participants to modify it, and the exhibition, which served as a platform for feedback of the workshop and for the participants to become seen and heard with their hand-made characters and stories. The received feedback and the results speak for the empowering experiences of the participants when being equally appreciated with their own uniqueness through participatory, teamwork highlighted practices. The thesis also discusses the replicability of the workshop.

Key words: empowerment, narrative identity, art-based methods, storycrafting, diaconia, workshop, Nepal

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## 1 NAVIGATING TOWARD AN IMAGINARY WORLD

*A Muslim mystic Ibn Arabi presented in 13<sup>th</sup> century a thought, that God has placed one of his endless god's names into each human being. In every one of us there is a unique imprint of God – and together we form a musical score which only God can sing.*

*By searching the outline of these imprints each one of us can only seek that unique name of God – and respect that by necessity the inner search of our neighbour appears different, as in his god's name there is a different tone, different colour, different shade to the one placed in us, the imprint that God has placed him is different from its relief and surface.*

*Therefore we should never chase a consensus of full agreement. God is incomprehensible to our mind, a rhapsody of impossibility, a passionate wish that after all we are not alone in deserted and empty universe, that we are not once and for all ever entirely abandoned. (Gardell 2006, 14-15, free translation by the author of the-  
sis)*

With the words of Jonas Gardell (2006, 14-15): “*In every one of us there is a unique imprint of God*” and we can search “*outlines of that imprint.*” I am interested in narratives, unique stories, and those processes of searching, which make a person who she or he is and in such way special because “*the imprint that God has placed him is different from its relief and surface.*” In the Imaginary Creature workshop through dreaming and playing with imagination, utilising creative, art-based methods, the participants traced answers for the question: “If I could be anything I wanted to be what kind of imaginary creature I would be?” The core idea is that nothing from this world binds or limits; the only limit is the participant's own imagination, what it allows her to be. With this practice the intention was to enable an experience for a participant to become visible for others, to be heard with a story that she wishes to share. This leads to experiences, in which the participants feel themselves and their stories important and through those help them to strengthen self-esteem and understanding about who I am and what kind of a person I would like to be.

The thesis relates to the concepts of empowerment and contextual theology. The concepts of identity and narrative identity are earlier studied and worked

with for example in various kinds of workshops, from which I drew ideas. The inspiring articles of the workshops describe how one of the emphases is to offer various ways for participants to experience empowerment, on the one hand through strengthening own identity and on the other hand strengthening community spirit utilising art-based methods. Recognising one's own history and experiences and understanding their influence makes them easier to accept. As a result, it strengthens a person's identity and enriches his/her life. Jerome S. Bruner has claimed that to find own place in the world is based in the end on the power of fiction. (cited in Martin 2004, 101). Life is full of interpretations. My way of seeing is different than of another person. My search is different, but as Gardell philosophises: *“together we form a musical score that only God can sing.”*

The thesis takes part to qualitative research focusing on functional, developmental-oriented approach in a form of a workshop. Already from the beginning of the thesis process my wish was to combine thesis topic and material gathering with an international placement. I thought the most successful and fruitful results could be reached within a placement organisation with people I worked with. From these starting points the thesis' functional part finally developed to be implemented in Nepal in a girl's community Balika Peace Home, which is maintained by the oldest Nepalese non-governmental organisation CWIN.

The material for the thesis was gathered during the workshop. It consists of the workshop outputs made by the participants in different phases of the workshop, such as drawings, stories and hand-made characters utilising recycled materials. These are complemented with photos, notes of participatory observation, and informal interviews with workers of CWIN and participators of the workshop including volunteers. In reporting I describe the process and the assessment of the workshop and the results. I present different concepts and previous studies as well, through which I argue for why having fun together had also meaningful and beneficial side, which was fitting to the principles and the programmes of CWIN.

The results of the workshop were encouraging. They show that the girls enjoyed working in a creative way, and some of the girls shared that they saw the relation between own imaginary creature and own life. Several of them wish to teach this kind of working in other communities. The workshop introduced for the girls and for the organisation new methods, for example storycrafting, and tools, such as recycled materials, to be utilised in art-based activities. CWIN, encouraged by the results and the feedback of the girls, saw that the workshop would benefit different institutions in the field of child welfare and child care, for example schools and orphanages. Especially utilising recycled materials enables the workshop to be implemented in institutions and in villages, which have a short of resources and materials.

Kari Latvus and Antti Elenius describe that diaconia in itself is multi-professional and multi-scientific phenomenon, like a crossroad or a market square, which can be reached from various directions (Latvus & Elenius 2007, 29). For my diaconia studies, I relate the thesis to contextual theology and to a few other diaconal perspectives.

### Acknowledgements

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## 2 NARRATIVE IDENTITY AS A TOOL FOR EMPOWERMENT

Encounters have a strong role in empowerment process, even though it is a personal process. The concept of identity is 'a flowing undercurrent' from which self-knowledge and self-confidence draw strength. Positive development in a person's identity enables empowerment. Therefore the theoretical frame of the thesis sheds light on the concepts of empowerment and contextual theology, as well on the concepts of identity and other concepts related to self.

### 2.1 Empowerment

Empowerment is an umbrella term for well-being and becoming heard and seen; empowerment includes these concepts. Empowerment and empowering experiences influence for wellbeing increasingly. It is a question of becoming seen and heard in the way that one experiences strengthening own identity. The aim is to raise self-esteem. These all are the concepts that I was interested in the beginning, and here I open the concept of empowerment closer as it is wide and flickering, widely used and also misused concept in recent social sciences.

Juha Siitonen (1999, 2, 117) describes the theory of empowerment, which he has developed in his study:

the basic assumption of the theory of empowerment is that empowerment is an inherently human and individual process. It is a personal and social process, in which inner power is nontransferable to another. -- Empowerment can be strengthened through subtle and supportive measures, for example openness, freedom of action, encouragement and through strengthening a sense of security, trust and equality. Empowerment arises out of and gives rise to human well-being. (Siitonen 1999, 2, 117.)

According to Siitonen's theory of empowerment a person is considered as active, creative and free actor, who constantly sets objectives for him/herself. Be-

liefs regarding to self and own possibilities are mainly developed in social interaction. Siitonen defines that empowerment is a process that starts from a person him/herself where action environment and circumstances can have remarkable meaning. Thus empowerment can be more probable in certain environment than another. Empowerment does not happen through outside pressure or under compulsion or decision of another person. (Siitonen 1999, 93, 118.)

Empowerment can be described to have a 'dynamic image', which has an energizing character, enabling creative solutions and voluntary empowerment from own premises (Siitonen 1999, 98). For empowerment it is important that a person feels safe, accepted and respected. Then it is possible for him/her to evaluate his/her context at least in some extent enabling for building future. This is in connection to a question what kind of a person other people see me in my own perspective? Another important question is *What kind of a person I would like to be?* This is related to how a person anticipates future and especially how a person ponders objectives or expectations that he/she sets for future. (Siitonen 1999, 132.)

## 2.2 Contextual theology

Empowerment can be also examined from theological aspect and contextual theology assists in that. Contextual theology is an umbrella term that means theology which is combined to a situation, to a time and to a place. Everyday life theology is contextual theology, which has its roots in the Liberation theology started in Latin America. Kari Latvus (2002) explains that the most essential part of contextual theology is the level of everyday life, the grassroots level. The contextual theology of everyday life is implemented in streets, in clubs, in kitchens, in diaconia offices and in working places, where everyday life happens. The theology of everyday life level belongs to everyone. (Latvus 2002, 13, 24, 170-171.)

Latvus names four different aspects that enable socially responsible contextual theology: to recognise everyday life, to act together, towards justice and participatory spirituality. These aspects are aiming to liberation and participation, which are part of empowerment, too. (Latvus 2002, 174.)

In the aspect of recognising the everyday life the aims are clearer awareness of situations in society associated with personal reality experiences. To recognise the everyday life attempts to allow voice and words for people and issues that would not otherwise be adequately heard and reported. (Latvus 2002, 176.) In the aspect of acting together in contextual theology the aims are to strengthen supportive interaction, which encourages and generates hope and through that strengthens communities' functionality and networks. (Latvus 2002, 177). Part of contextual theology is the aspect of towards justice. It aims to promote well-being and participation to develop equality in society (Latvus 2002, 178). Without the aspect of spirituality, contextual theology would not be theology. In the aspect of participatory spirituality the aim is to expose views to grace and hope amidst of everyday life. The aim as well is to arouse everyday experiences into discussion with faith, relating narratives and experiences from Christian tradition to current narratives. (Latvus 2002, 179.)

### 2.3 Identity and other concepts related to self

The thesis is based on the concept of identity. For this base can be affected with questions like *What kind of a person am I?* Or *What kind of a person would I like to be?* (compare to Imaginary creature workshop) These questions are in connection to self-image and self-confidence. In the chapters 2.3 and 2.4 I present the concept of identity and narrative identity with thoughts and arguments from researchers and academics, which I found interesting.

An essayist in her own words (Mazzarella 2003, 49), when describing her identity as a writer, Merete Mazzarella refers to an English novelist and poet John Berger in her book 'Tähtien väliset viivat. Esseitä identiteetistä', essays about

identity. Berger has made a story about stars and constellations. Storytellers draw an imaginary line between stars that are close to each other and thus they created them a figure and an identity. The stars followed each other on that line like incidents in stories. Of course interpreting and seeing constellations neither changed the stars nor the dark emptiness that surrounded them. It changed the way how people interpreted the night sky. (Mazzarella 2003, 43.)

Mazzarella writes that through all of her works she discusses the theme of identity. In book in question she has investigated the concept of identity more precise. According to her the word identity comes from Latin word 'idem', which means 'same'. It can be referred to mean three different things: 1) self-image, individuality, everything that creates an experience of united, special self; 2) collective, something that creates a feeling of belonging to a group; and 3) permanence, continuity in time and in space, something that today I am the same as yesterday. (Mazzarella 2003, 21.)

Sirkku Aho summarises the confusion of concepts according to self. Researchers have different opinions what are meanings for example for self, identity, self-perception, self image. Aho, cited also in Juha Siitonen's study, states that these above mentioned concepts include three different processes: being conscious of self, knowing self and appreciation of self. The importance and emphasis is different in these concepts. (Aho 1997, 16; Siitonen 1999, 130.)

Simplifying, identity is described to be a similarity, in comparing two things. It is also common expression when dealing person's experiences of him/herself and belonging to a community or a culture. Then questions like 'who am I, where do I come from and where do I belong to' are asked. (Sava & Katainen 2004, 22-23.) It is possible to distinct three different parts in self: 1) identity, for which questions like *Who am I?* and *where I belong to?* can be asked. 2) Self image, a question *What kind of a person I am?* can be asked and 3) Self-confidence; *What is my value and meaning?* (Ojanen M. cited in Siitonen 1999, 131.) In turn, identity is gradual change in oneself to become into another. Inkeri Sava and Arja Katainen (2004) make a conclusion that the answer for the question

‘who I am’ is continuous structuring of a relation of staying the same and changing. The structuring happens through different self-expressions. Identity does not have a constant and changeless base. Both an individual and a cultural identity are built in historical and in social relations to meaningful others. The same person can act differently in various situations for example in school or at home. The self is not understood as genuine or stable. Self is developed and changed in relation to that how we are treated and how both cultural and social circumstances define us. (Sava & Katainen 2004, 22-23.)

Merete Mazzarella ponders that interest for the concept of identity is related to a need to find a meaning for life; identity creates meaning (Mazzarella 2003, 33). She refers to a novel of an English writer Muriel Spark, in which a woman changed invisible always when she was left alone. Identity is something collective, something that is related to interaction within it changes. Identity is created in interaction between me and others. We all are dependent on being seen. As well it is correct and reasonable to conclude in identity intentions of a person: the way one wants to be seen. (Mazzarella 2003, 7, 15, 19.) Charles Taylor supports Mazzarella’s argument by claiming that we determine our identity always in dialog with others and to those identities that our *significant others* (Mead G.H.: Mind, Self and Society) see in us and sometimes we fight against those identities. Identity determines ‘who we are’ and ‘from where we come’. (Taylor 1995, 62-63.)

## 2.4 Narrative identity

Hannu L.T. Heikkinen (2002) presents that meaningful learning experiences shape identity inevitably. The meaningful learning experiences change in some parts answer to the question ‘who I am?’. Heikkinen sees that a human being is a telling creature who interprets the world through narratives. Human being understands his/her life in a form a narrative and develops the identity through narratives. A process of narrative functions to both directions: inside and outside. Human beings create their reality by narrating their life stories and at the

same time absorb stories from that social narrative reserve in which they are part and live. Identity develops in listening and retelling. This assumption also supports the meaning of dialog: normally stories are told or at least wished to be told to someone. (Heikkinen 2002, 101-103.)

Inkeri Sava (2004) supplements Heikkinen (2002) by claiming that for own identity process it is important to be heard, but in addition it is important to hear lives of others. Narrative identity is not constructed only on narratives made of oneself, but by empathising narratives of others as well. When someone narrates his/her own life, the narrator activates experiences of listeners and thus narrator's life story becomes touching. While telling his story, he as if tells mine too. (Sava 2004, 55.)

Narrative identity is a narrative made by a person him/herself about who he/she is. Factors that are individual in our lives are developed in relation to other people and to interaction with them. With assistance of a narrative of one's life and an interpretation of the life a reciprocal connection is formed. Distinctiveness is not only a product of a social conversation. It is one's own interpretation about oneself and about one's life that is formed in a social interaction. (Sava & Katainen 2004, 24-25.)

The identity, a dialect process of similarity and changing of oneself, is expressed in all of that what and how a person narrates to others about him/herself and his/her life. Working with own narrative together in a safe environment with others can gradually open person's own life history, to become aware of the life history and to develop person's own life story. The importance of the narrative identity can be especially justified for persons whose identity and self are developed in unsafe circumstances; hence the experience of oneself may be fragile or worthless even. (Sava & Katainen 2004, 24-25.)

The inner voice has something unique to tell. The guidelines to the way of living for everyone can be found only inside of ourselves. When expressing genuine self, it determines oneself at the same time. Honesty for self means faithfulness

for own uniqueness, fulfilling that chance that is especially open for oneself. This is a powerful ethical ideal, which is part of our culture. It gives crucial ethical meaning for connection to self, to own inward nature. (Taylor 1995, 58-59.) Virpi Vesanen-Laukkanen, Inkeri Sava and Mari Martin accompany Taylor and characterise that in a process to know oneself is especially about to find what is true for one. Verity of an identity narrative cannot be evaluated by outside facts. It is understood similar as performative and true as such. (Vesanen-Laukkanen, Sava & Martin 2004, 26.)

### 3 CREATIVE METHODS

The only possibility for change is to face wickedness -Marjatta Barty in *Taide ja toiseus, syrjästä yhteisöön*

The book *Taide ja toiseus, syrjästä yhteisöön*, inspired the planning stage of the thesis project. It introduces articles from different academics in Taimi (art and the self) –subproject, that was part of the SYREENI research project. (SYREENI = Academy of Finland’s Marginalisation, inequality and ethnic relations in Finland). A central theme in the Taimi -project has been to construct self and life stories utilising art-based methods. The aim, with both children and adults, has been to encourage and nourish self-knowledge and communal attachment. One of the main goals in TAIMI –project has been to strengthen community spirit. (Krappala & Pääjoki 2004, 7-8, 139.)

In a project ‘Seen but Seldom Heard’ implemented in England creative methods have been utilised similarly to produce symbolic meanings in qualitative research to understand marginalised groups of young people and their interpretations of their environment to achieve engagement to their community (Fenge, Hodges & Cutts 2011). Diane Coholic (2011) presents encouraging findings of a qualitative research conducted among children who are from various reasons clients of child protection. In the research-based group programme art-based methods were utilised in order to develop self-esteem and self-awareness and social coping skills of children in need. (Coholic 2011)

Charles Taylor (1995) ponders that there is a certain way to be a human being that is especially my way. It is important to follow one’s personal way and not to copy other’s ways. It is important to be honest to self. Otherwise it can be a danger to lose the meaning of life, the meaning of unique humanity. (Taylor 1995, 58.) To find oneself requires imagination as arts do. Inkeri Sava argues that artistic creation becomes fundamental form of defining oneself. Thus authenticity is both aesthetic action and self-realisation related to personal inner



world. Being authentic is openness and sincerity for self. It is recognising and accepting own life experiences, feelings, fears and needs. (Sava 2004, 56.)

The experiences in TAIMI –project show that working with own life story fascinates children, who search their own places in new communities. Working with own narratives a child has the power to determine the content of them and to whom those are shared. The child determines who may access to his/her life and what in his/her narratives is true and what is fiction. Sometimes narrator challenges a listener to narrate equally. It is an action where reciprocity and trust is sought. (Krappala & Pääjoki 2004, 11.)

Virpi Vesanen-Laukkanen, Inkeri Sava and Mari Martin (2004) discuss in a book *Taiteeksi tarinoitu oma elämä* their experiences of different art workshops, which were implemented as a part of the Taimi -subproject together with teachers and pupils in a school. According to them it is important to structure one's own life for oneself and through that to familiarise with self more consciously; with the unconscious and hidden sides, too. However we need another person with whom to reflect and to share. Seemingly, in the process when on the one hand giving space and time for other person and on the other hand receiving space and time for own narrative creates an experience of narrator's life as special and precious. The value of a told and shared narrative is not in an objective truth, but in an experience of its significance. It is meaningful to share with people who care. In sharing the individual uniqueness is united to a communal experience. (Vesanen-Laukkanen, Sava & Martin 2004, 17; Sava 2004, 54-55; Vesanen-Laukkanen 2004a, 69.) Marni Binder and Sally Kotsopoulos (2010) report similar empowering experiences as a result of art-based working with children in a project in Canada that aimed to explore and understand oneself and others (Binder & Kotsopoulos 2010).

### 3.1 Art-based methods

Even though fantasy is situated in different world it tells about ourselves. It gives possibility to learn more about ourselves and the world around us. (Hirsjärvi & Kovala 2004, 7.) A fairy tale is a meeting spot of a true and imaginary (Martin 2004, 79). Through art-based activities it is possible to dive into a world of fantasy and imagination. To utilise symbolic and creative practice of communication in social work should be seen as bridges for communication with children who have difficulties in expressing themselves and engaging with others (Lefevre 2008, 130). In order to respect children's autonomy for their own feelings when working creatively with fantasies and stories, a practitioner enables children to situate stories in such distance that a child him/herself feels secure. (Tomma Jaana, personal communication 11.11.2013)

Art-based methods are supposed to be joyful, creative, non-threatening, supportive and inclusive. They support the psychological wellbeing of children by assisting them to express their feelings and thoughts, to improve self-esteem as well as psychosocial skills and coping strategies. In difficulties in verbal communication, thoughts and feelings can be expressed non-verbally through creative activities. The spiritually sensitive art-based methods and activities are called holistic due to their practice of mindfulness and philosophy of supporting spiritual and existential themes. (Coholic 2010, 11-15, 20-27.) As traumatised and stressed children may react unexpectedly strong in creative working, practitioners' self-preparation is essential in order to follow high sensibility. One aspect of that is to provide ultimate respect for the children's work and creations. This includes such appreciation for the made image, story or play that "it is allowed to tell its own story". (Lefevre 2008, 144-145.)

Utilising art-based methods in social work the best resource that practitioners have is themselves and their abilities to work creatively and with high sensibility (Lefevre 2008, 145). According to Ahonen-Eerikäinen (1994, 4) arts can be utilised as a tool in client work by different professional helpers, who trust in therapeutic potentiality of the arts (sited in Kuusinen, 2008, 24). Social workers who

do not have qualification for to apply therapy should “no more than follow children’s leads and support their play by providing a safe space and attuned responses, ‘tracking’ what the child is doing, rather than setting out to work through these issues” (Lefevre 2008, 139). Working with holistic, art-based methods differs from art therapy. Art therapy is done by specialists, who hold a degree in art therapy or related fields, while in art-based working practitioners might borrow the techniques of art therapy. (Coholic 2010, 13.)

In general a therapy is a strictly agreed and applied setting, which includes defined duration, frequency and the costs of the appointments some details to mention (Tomma Jaana, personal communication 11.11.2013). Art brings holistic approach to the therapy. Art therapy is experimental, focused on action and process, where in the core is person’s own functional participation. Different art therapy orientations intend to support personal growth and empowerment. (Rankanen, Hentinen & Mantere 2007, 9, 11, 23.) As a special note of expressive arts therapy, it has multi-artistic approach, which combines methods from different fields of arts and emphasises ‘low skill, high sensitivity’ (Levine & Levine 1999, 11-12). Characteristic for expressive arts therapy is that works are not analysed by a therapist, but the therapist supports the client to find meanings of his/her own works (Linnossuo 2011, 81-82).

According to child psychotherapist Jaana Tomma the feelings should be allowed in creative working with children. If a child can express for example joy, laughter, sorrow and cry, it shows that the child has a connection with his/her feelings. In a safe relationship and environment, where a practitioner gives time and space for the feelings, it is possible to experience them by expressing and that can relieve a child. The value of fancy methods or excellent degrees loses their significance if the practitioner is not genuinely present and is not able to encounter with the child and his/her feelings. Tomma refers to the Bible verse in 1 Corinthians chapter 13:1-2: “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have no love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a

faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.” (Tomma Jaana, personal communication 11.11.2013)

### 3.2 Storycrafting

Tell a story that you want. I write it down just as you tell it. When the story is ready I read it aloud. Then if you want you can correct or make any changes. (Karlsson 2003, 10.)

Monika Riihelä started to develop storycrafting method in 1980s in Finland. She used narration as therapeutic tool to raise self-confidence and abilities of children. The method is developed through several researches and projects. It received the name storycrafting, in Finnish sadutus, in 1995 within one project. (Karlsson 2003, 100-112.)

Storycrafting method is a scene of interaction, a dialogue between a person who tells a story and a person who writes it down. Thus it is not only about narrating, but it is a method about listening, encountering, culture producing and doing together. Storycrafting method is based on viewpoint of a teller. It is a narrative, therapeutic method where the content of the story is not evaluated or the way it is told is not corrected. Results from earlier studies of storycrafting have shown that this method has created collectiveness in the group. It has also strengthened self-esteem and self-respect of children, also children with disabilities, and increased pride to their own abilities. Storycrafting is based on participatory and encountering actions. (Riihelä, 2001; Karlsson 2003, 114, 119, 133.)

The core method of storycrafting follows a pattern where a person is asked to tell a story from his/her own mind. It can be a short story, only a sentence, or it can be a long one. It can be true or from imagination, it can be from past, present or future. The narrator decides what he/she wishes to narrate. One person writes down the story as the way it is told, from word to word without correcting the grammar. When the story is ready the writer reads it to the narrator and

he/she can make corrections or add something if she/he wishes to. The ownership for the story is with the narrator. (Riihelä 2001; Karlsson 2003, 116-117.) Storycrafting can be utilised around a certain topic, which gives boundaries for the story. A narrator takes initiative what he/she wants to tell about the topic. Neither in this form the story is interpreted or evaluated. (Karlsson 2003, 115.) Storycrafting method can be utilised with pairs or in groups in different environments, for example in schools, orphanages, in social work, in parental advices, in special education and in therapy. (Riihelä 2001; Karlsson 2003)

#### 4 NEPAL, CWIN AND RIGHTS OF THE CHILDREN

I performed my international placement in autumn 2012 in Nepal where I also instructed the Imaginary Creature workshop for the thesis. In this chapter I provide some information of Nepal and my Nepalese placement organisation CWIN. I demonstrate some cultural aspects and a few examples how the rights of the children are implemented in Nepal reflecting to my experiences as well.

The population in Nepal is approximately 27 million inhabitants (2011). According to my references the population in Kathmandu Valley, in capital area, is difficult to estimate due to unregistered residents; rough estimation is one and a half million. Even though urbanism is growing fast in Nepal majority of the population lives in rural areas; in cities there are living approximately 17,1% of the population. 44% of the population lives under international poverty line, under 1,25\$/day, but under national poverty line the estimated percentage is 25%. (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2011)

Nepal is one of poorest country in Asia, and one of the least-developed countries in the world, but it has achieved enormous progress in the past 40 decades. The level of socioeconomic development has improved the second best in the world according to statistics. (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2011) Yet there are significant amount of challenges and developmental areas ahead. Among these are to achieve political stability and to continue working against unemployment, discrimination, deprivation and poverty. (World Health Organization)

Nepal suffered from civil war when the government of Nepal declared a war on Maoist communists in 1996. The civil war officially ended in 2007 and at the same time monarchy was defeated. The country was proclaimed a republic in 2008. From that on the temporary Constitution has been in force. As yet the parties in charge have not been able to agree on the Constitution. Instability in the country and many strikes slow down the normal everyday life and cause

safety risks all over the country. (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2011; The New York Times)

Nepal's temporary Constitution guarantees equal human rights to all citizens, but the implementation is insufficient and flagrant discrimination is practised against females and marginalised groups such as homosexuals and disabled people. Even though there has been gradual change towards equality for discriminated groups, yet learned prejudices, habits and stigmas that are causes of the cultural and the religious 'heritage' or traditions victimise the human rights of the marginalised groups. (Act Alliance) In addition the Nepal's government and political parties have neglected in practice to uphold the promises of liability to crimes against human rights practised during the civil war (Human Rights Watch).

Discrimination and inequality are deeply rooted in Nepali society. In 1963 the caste system was banned officially but still it has a strong influence in everyday life of the society: in status, education and work, and in interaction of individuals and different groups, and as a result to possibilities in life. The caste and social position highlights the ill-treatment discriminated groups have to bear. Especially the position of dalits and indigenous people is poor. Women face within these groups double oppression, for the reason of being a female and being born in a low cast or a dalit. Although the attitudes towards discrimination can be seen changing gradually. (Act Alliance; Mattila 2005, 20-21, 50.)

#### 4.1 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Nepal

United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948, which set a common standard for human rights worldwide. It is not legally binding, but treaties that States sign and ratify become legal obligations. UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and six other treaties are used as a framework for discussing and applying human rights. One of them is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which the United Nations

General Assembly adopted in 1989. It has become the UN's most widely ratified human rights convention (Unicef 2005)

In Nepal CWIN campaigned for the ratification of the UNCRC and was the first non-governmental organisation to invoke the Nepal's government for ratification. (CWIN). Nepal signed UNCRC in 26<sup>th</sup> of January 1990, and ratified it soon after it in 14<sup>th</sup> of September 1990, which meant that the government of Nepal agreed to engage to improve children's rights in its legislation and policies. These actions also involve other actors who work with children, for example CWIN, but also the principles in UNCRC are then meant to be respected by all members of the society. (Unicef 2005)

Although there has been improvement in society of Nepal regarding children's rights and human rights, but there are significant amount of children whose reality the treaties concerning human rights and the rights of the children have not improved. Especially girls are still abused in child labour instead of attending to school (Mattila 2005, 17). The statistics show that in Nepal there are children under 14 years old approximately 37% of the total population. Literacy rate for 15-24 years old is 86,5%. To study is provided free of charge, but there is a fee for attending to exams. School books are free of charge for pupils in primary school, from classes one to five, and for girls until class eight. It is estimated that 95% of the 5-9 years old in primary school age start school, but percentage for drop outs of that rate is relatively high: 38%. Estimation is that 31% of the children from age group 5-14 years old works in some kind of job, mostly in agriculture (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2011; United Nations Development Programme) This may affect to the dropout rate of school goers.

One of my duties in CWIN Helpline was to write case studies of the children which were then compiled to statistics. Through those I learned how children are exploited in hotels, restaurants and families. Usually in the cases families who live in rural areas make a contract with families living in cities. The children are sent to live in cities in families to do household work and for reimbursement they are provided with shelter and food in a family and with possibility to educa-



tion. Such an arrangement may work out in some cases, but often children are abused and promises and contracts are disobeyed. Children are too tired to study between long and heavy working hours and they are maltreated and abused physically and mentally.

#### 4.2 Position of females in cultures and traditions in Nepal

Religion, ethnic group, caste, family and thus education and place of residence strongly impacts to a life of a female person in Nepal; the caste system still influences enormously to the status of a female in the society. In general females are appreciated less than males. Women receive their status and appreciation through marriage and spouses; singleness or widowhood cause additional challenges to lives of females. They may face double discrimination if they belong to lower castes or dalits, or they are indigenous or orphans. Females also encounter more pressure in families than males, for example family violence, substance abuse of males, and malnutrition of females caused by poverty. (Mattila 2005, 20, 92.)

In the cities there has been considerable amount of progress in the past ten to twenty years, and for example in Kathmandu girls have plenty of possibilities and similar possibilities compared to girls living in western cultures. In addition, the education under 15 years old girls has progressed significantly: in ten years the amount of girls who have graduated from comprehensive school has grown with 20%. (Mattila 2005, 92; World Health Organisation) Based on the interviews which Kati Mattila conducted in Nepal in 2004 among female social workers, she outlines that in general the girls receive less care than boys. The boys are more encouraged to study and they have more possibilities to spend their leisure time than the girls, while girls have to concentrate to household duties too. (Mattila 2005, 73.)

Despite the tremendous improvement in the status of females in cities, in poor developing countries as Nepal, national and global ignorance and misdemean-

our against the human rights and the influence of globalisation reflects as very unjust and oppressive phenomena. Some of these are national and international 'home slavery', sex tourism and forced prostitution. Especially girls from poor families from rural areas are easily sold or swindled to be "home slaves" within or outside the borders of Nepal, but also to be trafficked mainly over borders to India to work as sex workers in brothels. Educating women and girls, helping them to earn independent living and informing them about the human rights and the rights of the women and children can be seen to have positive impact in empowerment of women and girls. The change is progressive, but not easily achieved. Through improving self-esteem and self-confidence the old social roles gradually change and women become more active members of community. (Finn Church Aid; Kristof & Wudunn 2010; Mattila 2005, 80, 96-97.)

Kati Mattila (2005) conducted the interviews almost ten years ago. The results showed that females trust that their position in society will improve when females themselves understand their possibilities and resources. The interviewees saw that through education and increasing self-confidence, empowerment and the improvements can happen. (Mattila 2005, 80.) My own interviews with girls in Peace Home carried similar message: generally girls see how traditional upbringing of children oppresses girls, but they believe that this changes gradually (Personal field diary). The trainings that CWIN organises for girls of villages enhance awareness of the rights of the children and the women and promote encouragement among females. This leads to gradual changes in society. The girls of Peace Home run some clubs for girls in villages nearby and they share their knowledge of the equal rights of the girls with other girls in villages.

#### 4.3 CWIN, For children with children

CWIN is a Nepalese non-governmental organisation founded in 1987 by student activists who raised their voice for the children's rights. The abbreviation CWIN comes from the name Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Center. It was then a first organisation in Nepal working for the rights of children and has grown to a

big promoter of the child matters in these years operating all around Nepal. In the year 2012, when I had my placement in Nepal, CWIN celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and various activities and events were organised.

The child protection policy of CWIN has principals in UNCRC and it is reflected in the actions of the organisation. CWIN works together with local authorities, with public administration, reaching the Ministry level as well, to develop the legislation for better rights of the children. All international and national Acts concerning the rights of the children are emphasised in the organisation's actions. It advocates the rights of all children despite of the background of a child. CWIN takes actions for rescuing children and works as a mediator in controversy cases. It provides legal assistance, gives counselling for the children and families, and supports an individual child's education, socialisation and social reintegration. It provides life skill training programme for oppressed girls, too.

In the schools mostly in rural areas CWIN supports youth clubs and clubs for girls, which are helping children to know about their rights, and it organises different kind of campaigns together with its partners. The clubs as well take actions to defend oppressed children, which can be seen truly a grass root level community development work. Due to CWIN's own training programmes in communities and clubs in schools, and utilising voice in public to influence for changes in communities in cultural and political aspects, it has a strong will to develop communities together with children and with those people who are part of children's lives, for example families, village members, authorities as teachers, aiming especially to empower women and children.

#### 4.4 Balika Peace Home – A girl community

I received a possibility to visit CWIN's maintained Balika Peace Home to implement the Imaginary Creature workshop. I worked in Balika Peace Home eight intensive days with twenty girls, who participated to the workshop, and with four

volunteers from Denmark and Finland. In the evenings and during one day I could have conversations with the rest of the community, too.

Balika Peace Home is a home of girls in Pasthan, in a little village approximately two hour distance from Kathmandu. All the children in Peace Home have referred through different Helpline emergency shelters to the Peace Home, some girls are sent to other homes provided by different NGOs. There were at that period 48 girls living in Peace Home. During my three month placement three girls, whom I met already in Kathmandu Helpline, were then referred to Balika Peace Home.

The girls have various kinds of backgrounds. Their ages vary from three years old to 17 years old, and they have various social class or caste status, educational and religious backgrounds. They have different kind of backgrounds of discrimination; there can be sexual abuse, other physical and mental abuse, child labour, street background or other abuse of children that are still common in Nepalese society. These can cause different traumas. Some girls are with learning disabilities and they need more assistance. Because of these disabilities or mental health problems some of them have strong medication. A combining situation is that the girls cannot be reintegrated with their families due to the problems and severe issues in there, and that they do not have other adults who could provide them safe childhood.

In Balika Peace Home the everyday life of the children gets its basic rhythm from school schedules and homework, meals and assistive household duties. The activities, which volunteers develop and facilitate, bring additional colour for the children's leisure. They have plenty of activities that volunteers and visitors, such as music, drama and dance teachers, instruct for them. I observed and was told that in the leisure time after school and during weekends the girls can decide on the activities and they can influence to the content of activities as well. CWIN had its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and for example the girls planned content of plays with the drama teacher for the show, which was celebrated in Kathmandu. The show dealt with the issues of caste and gender discrimination.

CWIN's ground policy and methods aim to empower discriminated children in all of their actions and to respect the meaningful participation of the children (CWIN). Through my observations and interviews in Balika Peace Home I can agree with this statement. The environment and activities in Balika Peace Home are aimed to create to be supportive for individual growth in a community. Each member of this community takes responsibility of a function of the community with her own abilities. It is emphasised that each member is allowed to be her own personality; with own strengths and weaknesses they are creators of equal environment.

In Balika Peace Home children are taught in various ways about equality: how the human rights are not depended on the caste, how females are as valuable as males, and how these children, who live without their biological parents, have the same human rights as all the children regarding to the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights and the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child. It was obvious that the ownership and the participation strengthen the membership in the community and that they all are working for the equality, first in their community and spreading it then to outside communities in schools and villages. In some occasions I wished to see more participation and involvement to the activities and everyday presence as well, from the workers side.

In the opinion of the interviewed girls in Peace Home they can influence to decisions concerning their everyday life as much as children should. The workers are trusted like parents or guardians; they as adults have better understanding for example decision making concerning future plans. The influence of the education provided by CWIN is noticeable in these girls reflecting the time of changes in the Nepali society. These girls know that girls and boys should be treated equally, but this is not generally implemented in outside society yet, especially in villages. The girls are afraid of the reactions of communities when they manifest the rights of the girls in there. In one girl's words: "Men are using verbal power and girls can be silent, only one trying to speak about the rights."

Siitonen (1999) addresses that the self-perception as well the supporting environment both have important roles in empowerment process. A human being also evaluates environment through self-perception. The idea of self is in connection with desires for his/her future and how he/she evaluates his/her resources according to desires. (Siitonen 1999, 130.) Aho (1997) states that a human being, who has a positive self-perception, has as well an optimistic attitude for future, and is able to set realistic objectives for it (Aho 1997, 16). Through my interviews with the girls I can draw a conclusion that they have dreams for the future concerning studies and professions. They named some dream professions as nurse and lawyer. It is common in the answers that they wish to help girls and women in the future and they wish to implement changes in communities and in the whole society.

## 5 SKETCHING THE OUTLINES

*I think participants should be those so called artists in the process using art based workshop methods. (Thesis proposal autumn 2012)*

Our mind sets goals or objectives. Life cannot be thought without this phenomenon. Our life is mainly trying to achieve matters, issues, things, that we appreciate. (Turunen cited in Siitonen 1999, 122.) Vilma Hänninen (1999, 20, 176) presents a concept of inner narrative. She describes it as a mental inner process, by which a person interprets his/her own life through meanings of inner narratives. Partly the inner narrative is created when told and acted. Partly it can be expressed, and partly it is hidden. All of the experiences are not told, all of the plans are not realised. (Hänninen 1999, 20, 176.) Mari Martin (2004) suggests to place an inner narrative and a fairy tale, a story together, when it allows a possibility to narrate something about oneself shrouding it to a mystery. The fairy tale enables breaking boundaries. Through fairy tales and stories it is possible to step further than when limiting within a truth. (Martin 2004, 79.)

The book *Taide ja toiseus, syrjästä yhteisöön* inspired me when planning my thesis and developing the implementation of the project, the workshop. In an article *Satuhahmot omakuvina* in the book Virpi Vesanen-Laukkanen describes her own experiences working with a group of children in a workshop, which utilised art-based methods to create fairy tale figures. (Vesanen-Laukkanen 2004b, 52-65).

In Imaginary Creature workshop mind is awakened to work through imagination to answer the question *If I could be anything I wanted to be what kind of imaginary creature I would be?* Creating an imaginary character is more sensitive way to narrate one's own dreams or past rather than narrating consciously desires of one. It does not force to reveal anything, creator of the character decides the features, feelings or scenes of the character he/she wishes to narrate and disclose.

I have pondered and discussed with several people about the different key words in the title and the thesis, and I shortly explain the use of them. Firstly I pondered between imaginary and fantasy and chose to use imaginary, because I understand it less categorising. I thought fantasy, or even more fairy tale, include already the learnt culture of fantasy and fairy tale figures, and those might manipulate thinking. Imaginary means for me freedom to utilise my own imagination. Secondly I conceptualise the creature, instead of character or figure, to have a soul 'being somewhere beyond alive', between real and imagination. This is the history for the name Imaginary Creature workshop. I asked children to tell stories instead of fairy tales. I asked them to tell something about the creature, something they think is important to narrate. The reason for that was my assumption that a word fairy tale would link too much for the heard and learned fairy tales, and association could limit participant's imagination, thus emphasis was again in freedom to create. The used literature in the thesis discusses also with the synonyms described above. Thus in my thesis the words imaginary and fantasy or character and figure are used for the same meaning as well as the words story, fairy tale and narrative depending on the context.

### 5.1 The purpose and objectives of the Imaginary Creature workshop

*..Feeling lazy to participate.. and then she enjoyed, feeling like angel in heaven, was good experience, then she woke up from the dream. (Field diary, note in the exhibition, 11.11.12, feedback of one participant)*

A story, when visualised and told in a form of a fairy tale, enables a child to become visible and seen as well as to become heard (Vesänen-Laukkanen 2004b, 53). In the workshop that Vesänen-Laukkanen instructed, she noticed that through children's own made-up dolls and fairy tales they have a possibility to deal with issues or past memories that are in their minds (Vesänen-Laukkanen 2004a, 74; 2004b, 63). The aim in the Imaginary Creature workshop was to inspire creativity of the participants and through that to provide a hint to open doors for the ways to examine themselves to develop self-awareness.



One of the objectives and the core ideas in planning were that every participant is able to complete each phase of the workshop and could participate to a final meeting, 'the exhibition', with own work. From ethical point of view it was essential to offer a possibility for everyone to participate regardless of their disabilities, in order to strengthen on the one hand community spirit and on the other hand individual empowering experiences. Group assistance was emphasised. Everyone made their own work, but in and with the group; assistance was given if needed. The main goal of the workshop was to gain experiences of success and joy, to enable empowering experiences for the participants when their voice is aroused, when the silence is broke down and their stories are heard; empowering moments, which support wellbeing of a person in a long run. Those are related to the personal experiences of finding strength from inside and experiences of identifying with other participants.

## 5.2 Development-oriented thesis

In the thesis guide of Diaconia University of Applied Sciences 'Towards Research-Oriented in Professional Practice' development-oriented theses, called functional theses as well, are defined to aim for developing, implementing and assessing new products, services or working practices. In combining designing, modelling and practical implementation of a new product or service and reporting of it the Imaginary Creature workshop follows the definition of development-oriented thesis rather than research-oriented thesis. (Diaconia University of Applied Sciences 2012, 32-33.)

The thesis guide defines

Product development (also called production) usually involves a single, relatively short process, the purpose of which is to complete an output or service for a certain user group while developing tools for practical work. Product development includes the design and construction processes of the product or service, the trial or implementation of the product, and the assessment. (Diaconia University of Applied Sciences 2012, 34.)

The Imaginary Creature workshop follows the definition of a product development as a service or product, but it has some features of development projects such as new work method development and testing as well. According to thesis guide these two subgroups may overlap. The storycrafting method that was utilised in the workshop was a new method for participants. In addition the utilisation of old garments as materials in order to learn to recycle and reuse of already existing materials to save in costs was fascinating new approach for participants. Several of them expressed their enthusiasm to introduce the workshop and its methods further. According to participants especially the idea of recycling is beneficial and practical in rural areas where there is lack of resources and materials. I have demonstrated in practise in another placement in Inari parish that Imaginary Creature workshop, a functional entity, as an output of product development is replicable, which is one definition of this type of the thesis. (Diaconia University of Applied Sciences 2012, 33-34.)

### 5.3 Participatory observation and other data collecting methods

*I have to buy a camera, because I want to save data as pictures, too. (Thesis plan autumn 2012)*

From the famous basic research methods described by Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara (2012, 191-192) I utilised observation, interview, and documents produced by the participants. Already in the planning stage I was aware of a language gap that might cause misunderstandings among interpreter, target group and me. The language gap is a challenge when expressing feelings by words that have several nuances. I also thought about possible illiteracy of the participants. These challenges had a role when planning my thesis and developing the thesis to answer to my initial research topics. I realised that in-depth interviews or other interview methods could be difficult in collecting data. Participatory observation combined to the implementation of the workshop, which utilised methods that do not require intensive detailed in-depth verbal explanations were in the core of my data collection.

Observation as a method is researching real life and the world. For that reason it is common in qualitative research, which elements my thesis is utilising too. While observing, it is possible to receive direct and spontaneous information in natural environments. Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara (2012) state that it is an excellent method in rapidly changing situations which are difficult to anticipate. It is a practical method in researching interaction as well. It is suitable for verbally or linguistically difficult situations, as the situations of my thesis data gathering in Nepal. In participatory observation social interaction has significant role developing important data (Päällysaho 2013). Observers participate to group activities, where observing can be modified easily in the situation. The weakness of the observation method is that it may produce significant amount of information in a short period of time when the difficulties are to be able to take notes or in other forms to document all the information. Also the observers may disturb situations and in that manner influence to those. The observers may engage emotionally to the group or situation, which are researched. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2012, 213-217.)

I started take notes of the observation in CWIN Helpline, which was my main working department. I conducted a few informal interviews with workers in the beginning to deepen my understanding of CWIN's working strategy and opinions of the workers concerning work situations and activities they would emphasise in their work with children. I utilised observation to receive better understanding of the structure of the Nepali culture, and within that the position of females, especially girls. I utilised diary to collect notes of the observations and the discussions. I participated in different activities that CWIN organised for children and workers and my everyday work was developed mainly around the interaction with children. Sometimes it was solely possible to observe atmosphere and body expressions without understanding any word, but most of the times there were people to interpret the language.

In Pasthali, in Balika Peace Home, where I instructed the Imaginary Creature workshop, main data collecting methods were participatory observation and informal interviews, which were complemented with photos, drawings, stories and

creatures that participants produced during the workshop. I documented materials to my field diary and to my camera. As well I had requested the volunteers to observe and make notes of the workshop situations. Those I collected immediately after each occasion. This produced plenty of information for the reason of being a rather large target group in which I would not have managed to observe and participate alone.

In occasions when there was a possibility I inquired individually the participants about their opinions and feelings of the phases in the workshop. I invited all the participants to provide me feedback in the final exhibition where they presented their work. The observation during the workshop and in the final exhibition, which served as a platform for the feedback, was challenged by the mentioned weakness of the participatory observation discussed in the thesis by Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara (2012, 213-217). The received amount of information was significant and in a short period of time the personal difficulty was to be able to take sufficient amount of notes.

#### 5.4 Ethical aspects

*Gods are inside of us, before respecting gods, please respect others (a girl 16-years old in Peace Home, Field diary 12.11.12)*

Natural for empowerment is that all participants are equally respected and accepted as they are, as well as constructive listening and profound caring. In relationship between a teacher and pupils, the respect is not given from up to bottom, from authority to participants of the group according to their skills. On the contrary everyone has special and unique experiences to share, which allows a person to be heard. (Robinson cited in Siitonen's study 1999, 157.) I was in a leading position in a workshop in that sense that I was in charge and facilitated the frames in which we worked. The participants were producing content in those frames. We had different roles, but we were equal and my role of a participant came clearer in the second face of the workshop, when we utilised storycrafting method (described in chapter 3.2).

It has to be noted with children and with people that are under custody that research permission from parents, guardians or from the adult, who is having the custody, is obligatory when children participate to a research. Even there is research permission allowed by the guardians or institution, the children involved have freedom to decide the participation, and the involvement has to respect the rights of the children. (Cousins & Milner 2007, 447-457.) Being aware of these ethical aspects firstly I asked permission from CWIN to implement activities with children according to my thesis plans. Secondly the plan required to find voluntary children willing to participate to the activities and to explain them with assistance of an interpreter the aim of the workshop. In addition I explained to the girls of the Peace Home that my thesis work will be published. Thus I advised them to use only their first name or initials in the outputs. CWIN decides according to their policy and ethics if the outputs are utilised in public or published with full name of the participants.

When my placement organisation changed in spring 2012, I felt responsibility to modify my thesis topic from the initial topic, which I had planned to implement with adult women. In my opinion the previous research question was not suitable for children; it was too 'heavy', thus I reformed my research plan. As Cousins and Milner (2007) assess the main challenges conducting research with children are their vulnerability and unequal power relation between adults and them (Cousins & Milner 2007, 448). Already when planning thesis topic among women I could not avoid personal insecurity about possible power imbalance between me as a researcher and women as interviewees. Is it intrusive to enter to field and require them to answer to my research questions? Should I rather provide something for them without requiring anything back? This was a turning point when I thought that an art-based workshop would do a favour.

In the beginning of the thesis process the information about the target group of the thesis was limited and it was uncertain how and where it would be possible to implement the workshop. The only fact that I was aware of was that children in CWIN are seriously discriminated and in several ways severely abused. This aroused me to consider my professional limitations, as well to be able to main-

tain the activities in the level that I am capable to work and that they will not harm. Lefevre (2008), discussed in chapter 3.1, confirms these thoughts by a caution that as traumatised and stressed children may react unexpectedly strong in creative working, practitioners' self-preparation is essential in order to follow high sensibility. Social workers who do not have qualification for to apply therapy should "no more than follow children's leads and support their play by providing a safe space and attuned responses. (Lefevre 2008, 139,144-145.)

The Imaginary Creature workshop developed from the idea that each participant is free to express herself in a level she defines. She can disclose that much of reality and own experiences and herself to the character that she feels convenient to express. Lefevre (2008) advocates this idea by summarising that to be prepared for the creative working a practitioner has to give ultimate respect for the children's work and creations. This includes such appreciation for the made image, story or play that "it is allowed to tell its own story". (Lefevre 2008, 144-145.) Each participant is allowed to disclose as much or as less as she wishes; to complete the activities nothing more is expected. These were crucial factors which reminded me by a thought from Martti Lindqvist: "A good helper accepts the fact that in all of us human beings there is a secret and that secret stays as it is, too."

In the beginning of the placement I signed CWIN's code of conduct, which emphasised to respect children's rights and their best interest. This included neutral political and religious behaviour. (CWIN) The emphases in our diaconal studies are on international diaconia and in ecumenical approach. Since the placement is part of the studies, I represented my university and studies in Nepal. In Nepal majority of population are Hindus. Comparatively to that fact majority of the girls in Balika Peace Home would be Hindus and minority if at all would be Christians.

Antti Kylliäinen and Wille Riekkinen (2013) have a vivid discussion of faith in our days world. Both of them refer to Italian bishop Nicolaus Cusanus (1401-1464) who presented his fundamental idea that in all religions it is a question of the

same divinity. In different times and in different cultures it is understood and worshiped in different ways. It is possible to solve religious differences and to find common truth together searching and discussing. (Kylliäinen & Riekkinen 2013, 93, 96.) In addition, acting together, having different religious borders crossing everyday life, the interaction integrates people's various aspects and assists us to notice similarities in all religions and how the fundamental energy, in my opinion, is the same.

I appreciate the CWIN's maintained neutral policy regarding religions. Religious aspects do not define the activities; the activities have to respect all religions and faiths. Latvus and Elenius (2007) illustrate that as diaconia is part of the mission of the church and its actions, an important justification of diaconia arises from doctrine of the Creation: the created world belongs to everyone and this work of Creation of God has to be cherished in a human being and in the world equally. (Latvus & Elenius, 2007, 32.) In my work my own faith is a fundamental base from where I draw. I might have a different religious background and a different faith labelling my identity than the people and environment around me, but I have no compelling need to make it visible neither convince it to be only possible way to believe, or that my way of believing is absolute truth.

Esko Ryökäs cited in Latvus and Elenius (2007) speculates that it is dangerous to say that only faith gives possibility to help a neighbour. He thinks that in the core of actions of diaconia has to be a neighbour not diaconia itself. Faith is part of actions but following Luther's thinking starting point for help is common sense which is adequate tool in duty to help. Then it is possible to avoid a threat that motifs and criteria of diaconia are in a helper's needs. (Latvus & Elenius 2007, 21). The similar message is summarised by bishop emeritus Riekkinen (2013) that there are as well other reckoned and respectable sources of theology than solely the Bible, that is to say the common sense and conscience (Kylliäinen & Riekkinen 2013, 21).

## 5.5 Preparing for the flow

*I would like to use children in the whole process, so that when we first make the dolls then children would tell stories which give dolls a life. Children are the ones that blow life into the dolls. (Thesis plan 2012)*

In the spring 2012 after hearing the changes with the placement organisation, my enthusiasm to implement an art-based activity for children got more air under the wings and the idea of completing thesis started to focus on more developmental orientation in a form of a workshop. Everyone who has had a doll or a soft toy knows the personal, tight and nurturing relationship with the toy. This idea led to study about imaginary creatures, fairy tale figures, developed in art-based activities and projects. I wished to organise a workshop from where something is left for the girls, something about themselves for their selves.

The dream was to enable participants to make something soft to hold, that has a character and a story; a creature, which a girl has personally created to whom she could feel connection and nurture. This led me to think about soft materials, for example old clothes and fabrics. To make those creatures alive for others too and to strengthen the connection to the creature I found the storycrafting method. The purpose is not to make grammatically perfect stories or fancy dolls; inversely the purpose is to give 'a freedom of an artist' for a child to express herself in a personal, distinctive way.

I presented to CWIN my interests and ideas of material collecting for my thesis, and my openness to other topic suggestions as well. In the first day I received a few brochures and leaflets published by CWIN, and two of those presented workshops where art-based methods were utilised. At the time when I received the permission from CWIN to collect data, the form of the thesis or material gathering was not decided completely, but I was encouraged to develop further the idea of art-based activities. The idea of implementing the workshop came clearer the further the time passed. I kept my eyes and ears open for chances



to collect material, but in those departments where I mostly worked the ideas did not find a way to proceed.

Larry L. Richman (2002) defines that “*a clear project definition and detailed objectives are critical to a success of the project.*” This requires client or participant involvement in goal setting, and wider understanding of the project environment and issues influencing to the project. (Richman 2002, 59-60.) In the planning process, when a draft of the workshop, time table and ethics were introduced, the leading workers of CWIN were involved. They liked the idea of the workshop, because it included activities for children, which are highly appreciated and welcome in all departments where children are staying. Arranging different activities is mostly a duty of volunteers.

After some weeks in the placement it came obvious that the only place to arrange workshop utilising creative methods is Balika Peace Home. Luckily in the end of October the head of the Peace Home visited CWIN's main office and I had a chance to present my ideas to her. She was positive about it all and she allowed the permission and free hands for me. The further the process and planning proceeded the involvement was focused to the target group and the participants, in my project to the workers, volunteers and two representatives of the girls of the Peace Home.

Satuhahmot –workshop that Virpi Vesanen-Laukkanen had conducted with children provided ideas to my plan of the workshop, but the Imaginary Creature workshop was implemented in slightly differently utilising different methods and materials. There was a strict time limit hence the workshop focused on completing all the phases to be able to have the presentation in the exhibition. The plan with main ideas and time table was drafted, leaving space and a chance for the process, to allow it to develop itself.

The plan involved strongly the ethical aspects as well, which can be related to contextual theology of everyday life. Each participant has her own rhythm to do and in the planning, where the space and chance for the process were allowed

for, in addition illiteracy and other disabilities of participants were considered too. Some contents in contextual theology discussed in chapter 2.2 by Latvus (2002) are acting together, towards justice by supporting interaction, which strengthens communities' functionality, and by promoting wellbeing and participation to develop more equal society (Latvus 2002, 177 – 178.) It is important to be 'empty', to have space to listen what is important for a child. The girls were told, when I presented the workshop that they have freedom to express if they do not like something and if they wish to modify methods.

## 5.6 Timetable

*Now when I don't know the place and participants yet, I assume that starting the activities, workshops or what then might work in a best way, I could start in the middle of October, and then continue until to the middle of December. (Thesis plan 2012)*

In the end of October, after meeting with the manager of the Peace Home everything happened in a fast speed and I travelled to outside of Kathmandu to a little village named Psthali in the beginning of November. They could arrange approximately one week for the workshop at this period, because the girls had other occupations, and there were coming very hectic weeks ahead for them. The tight timetable in order to achieve all the goals of the planned workshop combined with habits of Nepalese working culture brought extra pressure to push the workshop to its start. To be able to follow the drafted timetable required very determined attitude. I had calculated from four to five days, three to four hours for each day, to complete all phases of the workshop and the extra day was planned for the celebration, the exhibition.

In the first evening of my arrival workers arranged a meeting where I introduced two ideas for them and for two representatives of the girls in Balika Peace Home. They decided on an activity that was new for them: making a concrete imaginary creature utilising already existing materials. I presented the drafted, rough timetable, the need for interpreter and my wish to invite volunteers, who were staying in Peace Home at that time, as workshop assistants. The volun-

teers had already told their wish to participate in the workshop and their will to assist to make the workshop as successful as possible.

The second morning the idea of the workshop was introduced for the girls and willingness to participate was asked. In the first meeting with workers and in this meeting everyone's freedom to participate was emphasised, which meant that to press to participate against own will was not allowed from anyone. At this meeting I told that I am already pleased with five participants, but all of the girls are welcome. The time table was modified in order to include all who wished to participate. Time was a challenge because several of the girls had school the whole day; among the participants some had it in the mornings while some had holidays still. In addition all the girls had lessons with drama and music teacher for the coming 25<sup>th</sup> year celebration event of the CWIN.

### 5.7 Recycled materials and budget

One of my concerns is that in our society, and in general globally, we are surrounded by excessive and unnecessary amount of material, which is produced with different excuses. We drown to it if we do not think our values of consuming and producing more careful. Personally the attempt is to control consumption by reusing and recycling. The Finnish development policy shares the same concern. Environmental issues as well as reduction of inequality are in the core of Finland's policy in development cooperation. This policy for example aims to sustainable use of natural resources and strengthen social equality. (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2013)

The Imaginary Creature workshop is planned to be implemented with well limited budget and the idea to utilise recycled materials is developed for different reasons. First of all recycled materials are exciting and challenging imagination how to reuse them. Secondly I was aware of the extremely limited budget; hence all recycled, abandoned materials were the cheapest ones. Last but not least regarding to the thesis there is significant symbolism that serves it. The

article of Vesanen Laukkanen (2004b, 56) revived me to ponder this further: recycled materials are thrown away by someone as useless; material is given away from the owner, having a label 'abandoned', as the children in CWIN may feel due to their position in society. It was tempting idea to demonstrate how something that has been once abandoned by someone can become extraordinarily useful and special with full of stories. Something that has been considered as useless by someone is created to be beautiful and meaningful for the entirety. We are all God's children and equal as that. There is an image of God in each of us. By words of Gardell (2006, 14-15): *"In every one of us there is a unique imprint of God"* and we wish *"that after all we are not alone in deserted and empty universe, that we are not once and for all ever entirely abandoned."*

Before I went to the Peace Home I did not know what materials there are available. When the plan was presented to the manager with the idea of utilising old garments, she revealed there to be some material. In the first evening's meeting I presented the idea to utilise already existing materials. Luckily and for blessing there was a storage room full of old, used clothes, which were meant to be burned. In this meeting we invented what other possible materials could be utilised for example from the nature, such as leaves, sticks and clay. The emphasis was that every participant was free to utilise materials she wishes to. Papers for drawings and stories, glue and colour pencils were bought from Kathmandu. There were needles, threads and scissors in the Peace Home and the volunteers gave some pearls and woollen threads for to utilise.

## 6 THE FLOW

Positive charge is in its best close to Csikszentmihaly's flow – concept (cited in Siitonen, 1999). The flow can be defined as a form of an ultimate positive charge. During the flow feelings are positive, full of energy and assist in completing the task. Enthusiasm and spontaneous feeling of joy are the core elements in the flow. Positive charge as well as the flow is created at its best in approving, safe, respectful and confidential environment. (Siitonen 1999, 153.)

In Imaginary Creature workshop a safe, democratic and respectful environment is attempted to create by emphasising the holistic approach and ethical perspectives of creative working, discussed earlier in chapter 3.1. High importance is given to the non-judgemental environment, where each participant has a freedom of an artist to express themselves and their sentiments in a style they feel. The outputs are not evaluated. The workshop is a unity, which flows through completing three different phases. In order to support empowering experiences the phases consist of different art-based methods that support acting in a group, regarding individual's own strengths, such as drawing and colouring, storycrafting and making by hands a concrete creature utilising recycled materials. The methods and the environment are harnessed to make space for imagination and imagining: *"If I could anything I wanted to be what kind of imaginary creature I would like to be?"* A few examples of the outputs in the workshop are presented in appendix 1.

In the beginning of the workshop there were twenty girls from Peace Home to participate. In order to follow the ethical aspects and sensitive approach in working, there were assisting five volunteers, who were at that time working in Peace Home. Three of the volunteers were from Denmark, one from Finland, and one Nepali girl, visited Peace Home couple of days.

I selected some music to be played on the background to help the orientation and concentration towards working. I chose classical music, and different kind

of instrumental music, which I thought are not familiar to the children. It was fun to see how children moved their heads in rhythm of the music when they were drawing or making the creatures.

### 6.1 The first phase: Jumping to an imaginary world

*The atmosphere is intensive, in between loud too, but quite amazing how the children concentrate (Field diary 6.11.12)*

In the first phase of the Imaginary Creature workshop we utilised drawing and colouring to make a visual presentation of an imaginary creature each participant would wish to be. The drawing was utilised like 'a map' in the coming phases to assist to dive deeper in the fantasy world to create the own creature. I proposed the children to ponder the story and background already when drawing and colouring the creature.

*She picked a green colour. She hold the green, but didn't know to where it could be put. I showed different spots of the drawing to where it could be put, to where she would like to put the green and she showed the spot. –Many need encouragement and attention, assistance. (Field diary 7.11.12)*

### 6.2 The second phase: Diving to a world of stories

*And then there is a drawing of a little bit older girl and one girl who speaks English says that this older girl is not able to tell a story. So she doesn't ask her to come. At one point the girl comes to the drawing room, where we are now in the early morning a smaller group. She wants to have white paper and she comes to me. She wants to tell a story. (Field diary 7.11.12)*

In the second phase we created a story. It may include a character or a personality, a background or a history of the imaginary creature, or it may explain the picture; the narrator decides it. This enriches the character and personality of the creature; it deepens the meaning of the creature and unites the creature and the narrator in a unique manner. I offered possibility to the participants to

choose whether to write the story themselves or to apply a new method for them, the storycrafting method, which I encouraged to choose. They chose storycrafting, because the idea to narrate when other one listens and writes down the story fascinated them. We modified the storycrafting method as a tool while proceeding due to lack of common language, time and interpreters.

It was a noisy, joyful mixture of languages, where everyone however concentrated to their own task at that moment. Volunteers assisted to write down stories, while a few girls narrated them in Nepali, and those who were able to translate them in English assisted to interpret. A few girls could narrate without interpreter while a few listened to the story. Couple of older participants wrote their narratives without utilising storycrafting method due to the tight schedule and lack of facilitators. For the exhibition, participants wrote their own stories by their own handwriting by colour pencils; that creates the connection to the story even more personal and visually unique as well. This served as a learning task for English language, too.

### 6.3 The third phase: Breathing life into the creatures

In the third phase each participant made by hands their imaginary creatures into a real figure, doll or puppet, out of used clothes and fabrics. For the filling we utilised the old filling of one blanket and of two pillows, which were found from the storage room. In this phase participants breathed life into the creatures. In this phase ways of working are based on materials available. The core idea is to utilise recycled materials due to their character. The slight amount of materials available had to be strictly limited in order to ensure that all of the participants are able to make the creature.

My intention is not to label, define or categorise the girls of Balika Peace Home, but arouse a symbolical thought that something that is abandoned by someone else can be a treasure for another. Everything does not have to be clean and brand-new, because that is not life; as unreasonable and unfair it is in signifi-

cant amount of occasions, but if it even slightly brings hope all has its meaning, which was encouraged in the speech: ”-*there are so many of experiences in all of us, all the colours and those are making us beautiful and the person that we are.*” (The speech, Appendix 2.)

#### 6.4 The Fantasia World –exhibition: The score that only God can sing

Our lives are built through narrating them by arts. It is possible to increase understanding to each others’ lives by sharing experiences and empathising to each others’ narratives. (Vesänen-Laukkanen 2004a, 75.) “In every one of us there is a unique imprint of God – and together we form a musical score which only God can sing” (Gardell 2006, 14-15).

The celebration, the so called exhibition of the workshop, which we named ‘Fantasia world’, was organised with the volunteers. It served as a platform for the feedback too. Every participant was offered a possibility to present voluntarily their creatures. In the beginning I presented my thoughts about the whole process in a form of a ‘speech’ for the whole group. It is important to provide supportive feedback and express gratitude after this kind of workshop emphasising the success of every participant in completing all the phases. With my words for them I wished also to encourage the girls to present their work. I invited the girls to tell at least the name of their own creature if more detailed presentation would have felt inconvenient in order to have fulfilment for the individual process, having the ending of the process in applause from the audience, to be the star of the celebration. With that manner the appreciation was offered for the effort the participants made to support the feeling of being special with own work.

Some of the girls read their own stories and some asked another person to read. The stories were read in English as they were written too, and then translated into Nepali. The invitation to share the ideas of the creature and to provide feedback for me how they felt this workshop was offered as well.



## 7 AT THE END OF THE JOURNEY

We humans all around the world have different kind of expectations, definitions and pressure from outside of ourselves according to list that could continue endlessly for example our culture, environment, status, gender and society. Those we let to define and shape our identity and self-image. In the Imaginary Creature workshop there was a freedom for oneself to define *if I could be anything I wanted to be what kind of imaginary creature I would be* without any limitations.

Regarding the limitations of my professionalism, I have chosen theoretical framework that supports ethics of it. Firstly a workshop, which is constructed utilising art based-methods from the ethical aspect of storycrafting for example, do not require analysing or evaluating the results, which is a guideline in that frame. Secondly I do not analyse the stories or the drawings in the report; it is not the purpose of the thesis even though the idea of that would be very tempting when the stories are full of emotions and descriptions. I do not have required professional skills and information of the backgrounds of the participants for analysing. This is essential from ethical aspects according to my professional limitations and guidelines that were given in the workshop. I clarify that I do not know individual backgrounds of the participants. Those details are unnecessary in this kind of workshop working. Identity narrative is understood similar as performative and true as such; evaluation of its verity is not even possible (Vesänen-Laukkanen, Sava & Martin 2004, 26). However the participants themselves can discover meanings for their creatures and stories if they wish to.

Alternatively, in this chapter, I describe some of the themes of the made creatures and stories, which are common in them. With some of the girls I had informal discussions concerning life and future aspects like dreams and wishes. Based on those discussions I carefully make few interpretations in the following common themes. In one story there are many different aspects, I have only

picked some examples into the text. All the fabulous 18 stories are in appendix 3 to be enjoyed. The stories are published only with the names of the Imaginary Creatures. The names of the girls are removed due to the ethical code of conducts in Diaconia University of Applied Sciences (author's note). In addition I discuss about the feedback reflecting to earlier researches and I evaluate the workshop and present a few suggestions how it could be replicated and modified in future.

### 7.1 Buffee, Gurash and other creatures of Fantasia –world

Mazzarella (2003), discussed earlier in chapter 2.3, supports that identity is something collective that is created in interaction between oneself and others. We are all dependent on being seen in the way we want to be seen. Below I describe answers that followed the main question asked in the workshop: "If you could be anything you wanted to be what kind of imaginary creature you would be?" All of the stories of the creatures narrated about interaction and different kind of relationships. Some cherished the friendship, like in the story of Gurash: *"...She is a friend with other flowers. Whenever she sees her friends, she becomes happy..."* Some talked about family, as in an example in the story of Cuti: *"..I lost the way home and I live in the earth. I am missing my family..In the flower garden I see my father. He come to take me home home. I feel happy and I go back home with my father. When I go back home my family member see me and they feel happy.."*

Several of the girls had a nice message in the story related to people in general level. One example is in the story of Beauty: *"Flowers are the party colours. When human being sees it they try to touch me but I don't want to die. I want to feel to be free like when I grow in the nature.. The things I have short time to give the smell and smile for you all so enjoy your life."*

A few of the girls made the creature that has characters they wish to have or message how they would like to impact to their community or environment. One

example is Buffee: *"..In dark Buffee gives light to all people in earth..She is like a mother and that's why all loves her, and Buffee loves all. All people is equal for Buffee, and she wants to help. She has a magic energy...Buffee is for sad people, people without parents and care, Buffee gives all energy so they become happy!"*

A few of them utilised this possibility to share and relieve their feelings and placed themselves to the story with creatures. One story reflects that: *"In my story there is my mother and me as a baby and my big sister. My mother is swinging with me, so I sleep. And my sister takes the flowers from the tree. The sister does so the flowers come down on me, and then I'm happy. My mother and my big sister only I'm crying my mother comes and makes me stop crying. My mother is a fairy-queen. My mother made the swing for me. And the swing I'm laying in is yellow, because the favourite color of my mother is yellow. I only meet my mother and my sister at night time. After they take the swing down, and my mother and sister go."*

## 7.2 Feedback of the workshop

*The Finnish volunteer (published without the name, author's note) told me later that she haven't seen the children so concentrated, that they had to be ordered to eat (Field diary 6.11.12, drawing)*

*When they understood how the story awakens , when they told the story, it was noticeable how they thought and told from their hearts. One of the Danish volunteers (published without the name, author's note) told too that it was so easy to see how they brought themselves and wanted depth to stories, some of them. (Field diary 6.11.12, Storycrafting)*

The exhibition served as a platform for feedback as well, where they were invited to share their feelings and experiences concerning the workshop. I explained them that I am a student and this workshop was my assignment and it is important to hear also critical feedback to see weaknesses of the workshop to be able to modify it. At the exhibition where all members of the Peace Home

community were present, approximately 50 persons, atmosphere was exciting and some of the girls were nervous to go in front of everyone. That may have influenced to the provided feedback. In addition my presence in front of everyone may have affected to the comments of the participants being softer and kinder than what it could have been anonymously or in a small group.

Siitonen (1999) characterises that because a human being has a profound natural need to feel him/herself precious, already a slight addition in this feeling enables a renewing impact to individuals as well as to groups and it can produce great amount of energy for learning and growing (Siitonen, 1999, 117). In most of the feedback the girls described that they were slightly afraid first with doubts how to be able to make a creature, but when they received assistance from the group they noticed they have ability to make and finally they managed. According to their feedback they felt proud of themselves and their work, which increased their self-confidence. The similar core aspect is emphasised in contextual theology. In acting together the aim is to strengthen supportive interaction, which encourages and generates hope and through that strengthens communities' functionality. These actions pursue towards justice, which aims to promote wellbeing and participation and to develop equality in society. (Latvus 2002, 177-178.) As a result of encountering the fears and doubts in the supportive interaction, the participants managed to win them and to complete all the phases with contentment. By their own words they developed self-confidence which I interpret as empowering experience.

In its entirety the workshop experience was enjoyable hence they wish to share and to teach this to other communities and to poor people. For most of the girls the idea of utilising recycled materials, in this case old clothes, was a new approach and it inspires them to share the idea in villages and in areas where there are lack of new materials and resources to utilise. They told that they received new knowledge of recycling and making dolls utilising old materials. According to the diary notes one of the participants summarised in her feedback that "making environment clean by making with recycled materials." This ap-

proach enables poor communities to have creative and empowering workshops and in addition make our environment clean.

The received feedback can be reflected to the contextual theology of everyday life as well. It demonstrates empowering actions in different aspects, discussed in chapter 2.2. Recognising the everyday life to develop clearer awareness of situations in society associated with personal reality experiences, it attempts to allow voice and words for people and issues that would not otherwise be adequately heard and reported (Latvus 2002, 176). The participants after being seen and heard themselves wished to have opportunities to instruct similar experiences to children in need.

When aiming for empowerment in a community, in the core is to strengthen interaction and social functionality. Acting together towards justice in the contextual theology of everyday life requests to support participation. By encouraging individuals for participation generates hope for them, strengthens communities' functionality, develops equality in society and promotes wellbeing. (Latvus 2002, 177-178.) One of the girls demonstrated in her feedback that "this workshop was good also for those who have some disabilities, because everyone can participate." One concluded her feedback that "this was an experience where everyone could do together." The girls, whom I noticed to have difficulties to be concentrated and to be motivated in the beginning, sincerely shared that initially they were suspicious and lazy to participate, but after participating they noticed how much fun it was. One of the girls shared that when she saw her friends making drawings and stories she cared to make as well. When full participation of all the participants was supported, the group coherence and team spirit were strengthened as well.

In the middle of the workshop, after drawing and storycrafting I asked how the participants felt especially about the order of the different phases if those should be reformed. They told me that they gave their heart for the drawing; it was good to make the drawing first and then the story. It was meaningful to combine those because those were supporting each other. They thought drawing gives

ideas for the story and story makes the drawing alive, giving more meaning for it. The girls also told they would like to play with imaginary things. As Martin (2004) has illustrated the connection between a fiction and reality in fairy tale that a fairy tale sets own life to be re-evaluated, compared and pondered. When it touches feelings its effect is appreciable, leaving a strong mark. A memory of it is powerful. (Martin 2004, 101.) Narrating the story made fantasy creatures more alive and personal, as the general feedback was that the story brought more meaning to the drawing.

Some of the participants saw that the workshop served in a holistic manner. One of the older girls shared that she “felt proud of herself in activities”. They “used their time wisely and not just sitting and talking.” In her story she “gave her creativity and she “gives high importance to everything” in the workshop. One girl disclosed that she has not told or written stories earlier even she made up those in her mind when she was a little girl. She told that she was “really excited and happy to do this kind of work to tell story that has something from her life in it and that she had courage to do it.”

*“-In every one of us there is a unique imprint of God – and together we form a musical score which only God can sing-”* (Gardell 2006, 14-15). It is meaningful to share with those people who care; it allows individuals to identify with the group. It supports the community spirit. As argued in chapter 3 the value of a told and shared narrative is not in an objective truth, but in an experience of its significance. In sharing the individual uniqueness is united to a communal experience. (Vesanen-Laukkanen, Sava & Martin 2004,17; Sava 2004, 54-55; Vesanen-Laukkanen 2004a, 69.) According to Augustine of Hippo a human being finds his/her way to the God through knowing self inwardly. Our inward source can be a way to the God. We are creatures that have profound inner dimensions. (cited in Taylor 1995, 56.) In the aspect of participatory spirituality regarding the contextual theology of everyday life the aim is to expose views to grace and hope amidst of everyday life (Latvus 2002, 179). Interpreting the given feedback from the aspect of participatory spirituality, in the encountering practices, which culminated the holistic experience in the exhibition, the participants

themselves exposed and manifested the perspectives of grace and hope amidst everyday experiences by sharing their unique stories, without measuring the verity of them.

On Saturday morning, one day before the exhibition, only one creature was remained to be completed. I was assisting the girl in our workshop room. She asked me to bring my laptop and put the music on, because it changed the atmosphere and she liked it. I cannot argue that the music has not influenced to some of the creatures and stories, for example lively Nutcracker of Tchaikovsky, soft and wishful tones from Iiro Rantala, or funny and surprising mixtures of harmonium and accordion composed by Milla Viljamaa. But I do claim that the music played inspiring role in supporting creativity and working with imagination and thereby it assisted to concentrate to the moments of working, supporting the Csikszentmihaly's concept of flow –the ultimate positive charge (cited in Siitonen 1999, 153).

In the opinion of volunteers and workers, the workshop was well organised and instructed. The most participants and people who were involved recognised it as an interesting workshop. The manager of the Peace Home revealed that I developed the trust and connection with the participants in a brief period of time and they shared their stories during that period. This supports earlier arguments how an imaginary narrative offers a possibility to tell something personal even it might be painful. I think this also demonstrates that when there is a safe forum to share some personal issues the girls utilise it, as Siitonen (1999, discussed in chapter 2.1) argues that empowerment relates also to environment. The manager recognised that I concluded the workshop and the core philosophy of it in my speech (appendix 2), reminding of the philosophy of life. Whilst delivering it in the exhibition she noticed from the faces of the girls that it touched them.

For me the best feedback and results were to see the happy faces of the participants and the manner how they took care of their own creatures and showed love to them. Some of the girls took their own creatures before the documentation. I needed to convince them with a solemn promise that they receive those

back after the documentation and exhibition. I think this shows how attached they were in the creatures and what those presented for them.

### 7.3 Evaluation of the workshop

*Beautiful pictures and stories are created. In many of them there are clearly own feelings, own background brought, in many stories own family, mother or father and their love that they have given; many of the stories are very touching. (Field diary 6.11.12)*

Through embracing a chance to create something novel together, pushing and stretching boundaries of comfort zone, experiencing success and joy together, the implementation of the workshop and the results of it are enjoyable. The dedication and smoothly expressed creativity of participants amazed me, the volunteers, workers and the participants themselves, too. All of the drawings, stories and creatures are appealing and lovely. The stories are thought-provoking and touching; even without knowing what is true and what is imagination.

Based on discussions with the volunteers I understood that the girls of Peace Home are told not to discuss about their background with other girls to avoid bullying and there are only a few workers who know background situations of the girls. When examining this in the aspect of the meaning of social status and caste system in Nepali society where people of lower castes or dalits are still discriminated, this practice is understandable. However, how I understand empowerment process from the aspect of identity, self-perception and self-confidence building, this practice is in contradiction. As Sava (2004) claims that for own identity process it is important to be heard, but in addition it is important to hear lives of others for the feeling of empathy. When a person narrates her own life, she activates experiences of listeners and thus her life story becomes touching. While telling her story, she as if tells the story of others too. (Sava 2004, 55.)



The nature of the process in developing identity is reciprocal. My assumption before the workshop was that the participants will narrate and disclose some scenes touching their lives and personalities in the stories. I can interpret from the received feedback about the workshop that the girls have a need to share their life experiences and feelings to daylight. A few girls had a great need to disclose their own background and who they are; they understood the workshop tasks through this motive, even though I avoided asking. In the end this however amazed me.

It does not mean anything for the success of the workshop how participants took the tasks differently, how they created the creature and its story. The most important is the freedom of an artist to express themselves and their sentiments in a style they feel, in a manner that the result pleases the artist herself. Lefevre (2008) summarises the ethical conduct by emphasising that to provide ultimate respect for the children's work and creations includes such appreciation for the made image, story or play that "it is allowed to tell its own story". (Lefevre 2008, 144-145.) When this is implemented in a safe and respectful environment the process strengthens the bond to the community, which creates then better community spirit. The absolute obligation in the practices concerning for example identity narratives is that the participation is voluntary and the process is carefully monitored throughout. For the safety and the convenience of the narrating process with children it is highly recommendable to limit the working to imaginary perspectives.

As Jaana Tomma (personal communication 11.11.2013) crystallised the thought that it shows respect for the child when she is allowed to determine the distance of the own narrative and herself; the importance is in an allowed possibility to be heard. The concept of narrative identity was utilised as a tool to enable empowering experiences while navigating towards visions and dreams starting the process by the words of the question: "If I could be anything I wanted to be.." It required a dialogue, the art-based activities where these were created and shared, and a stage, the exhibition, where these were performed. To create the

process to be light, gentle and safe, imagination and freedom of expression were utilised.

To complete phases required five days of working, and after that the exhibition and celebration was organised. It was a short process, like a honeymoon; one part of the ensemble, where we did not dig too deep due to the character of imagination and due to short acquaintanceship and ethical aspects. The pressure of tight timetable affected to the implementation of the plan through the whole workshop. Already from the beginning, when instructions were given, it was difficult to have all the participants present at same time. The phases of the workshop had to overlap due to several different occupations the girls had. From twenty girls two, who were not adolescents and who studied somewhere else, did not have time to complete the workshop due to other occupations. Some participants were much quicker than those who dedicated more carefully to the different tasks of the workshop.

When working in processes where own life stories have been narrated through art-based methods Virpi Vesanen-Laukkanen has noticed that more meaningful has been the process of making itself. The pictures have created new pictures and stories. The stories may have continuation in new stories or in new pictures. (Vesanen-Laukkanen 2004a, 69.) It is important when working with narratives that they are allowed to change. Next time a participant could create another kind of creature and narrate another kind of story, for example how two of the participants worked in this time with their creatures 'Cuti' and 'The Angel'. If we could have had more time, on the one hand it could have been easier to dive deeper in the stories and creatures, and in the other hand we could have played with them. Accordingly there would have been a variety of stories for one creature. This is one of the suggestions in chapter 7.5

Siitonen (1999) outlined in chapter 2 that empowerment can be strengthened through supportive measures, for example encouragement and through building trust and equality (Siitonen 1999, 2). In the workshop there were a few girls with learning disabilities towards whose full participation the atmosphere was not

equally supportive. Latvus (2002) states that the contents in contextual theology are acting together, towards justice. This means actions to strengthen supportive interaction, which encourages participants and generates hope. Through these actions it is possible to strengthen communities' functionality and promote wellbeing. These support participation to develop equality in society (Latvus 2002, 177 – 178.)

For the reason of being a large, very active and loud group, there was a danger, that the most active and loud participants would take space from more silent participants and from participants with learning disabilities. Intermittently the loudness and other stimuli from the group around may have disturbed the concentration. Several participants lost their interest when they had a 'blank moment', and they did not know either how to start or how to proceed. Even though the purpose was that the assistance is given in the group among participants, it was essential that in this workshop there were a few assistants, in this case great volunteers. According to the core value of the workshop, which adapts values of the contextual theology, they all received individual guidance when required and several needed encouragement to continue in order to enable equal participation and strengthening community spirit in completing all the phases. Thereby the belonging, the ownership and the engagement were supported in order to enable at the end enjoyment of the results achieved by the participants and to obtain empowering moments.

When I reflect my working with the girls of Peace Home to the personal discussion with child psychotherapist Jaana Tomma (11.11.2013), the time and space were given for the girls to express their variety of the feelings. I cannot overemphasise the importance of sufficient assistance of facilitators when working with a large group, in our workshop the great assistance of volunteers. The large group size brought challenges to maintain sensibility in working. For that reason I required each girl to show her work for me after completing each phase in order to encounter her needs personally, and almost every participant followed the request. The importance was also put to thank personally each participant with some complement about the work or her effort, which is very essential for

the feeling of being precious with own talents. If I noticed that a participant had not put effort to the work I talked with her about supplements, for example colouring the background of the drawing to make it more visible for the exhibition. Generally the girls agreed and were afterwards more pleased with the results. This aroused me to think how far it is beneficial to encourage and push the participant to do more, if she first tells that she is ready.

*It was great to notice how she was so proud of her own work, and how others clapped for her and showed admire.(Field diary 11.11.12)*

Vesänen-Laukkanen (2004a) has experienced in art-based group activities that 'opening' the pictures and stories is important. It is meaningful to share experiences, aroused issues and feelings of the process. The process has felt incomplete if there has been lack of time to immerse in sharing or it has been completely absent. In conversations aroused from the works, the trust and understanding for other person's experiences and thoughts increase. (Vesänen-Laukkanen 2004a, 69.) Similar was realised in the exhibition in our workshop when finally everyone was heard and seen with the complete fantasy figure and with thoughts about the process. As described in the feedback of a few girls it was strengthening to share something personal. I made a note during my visit in Peace Home that often girls with disabilities were in the background of activities, but now they were presenting their creatures with a big smile of success in front of others, shining like real stars as all the girls.

In the third phase of the workshop when participants made by hands the creatures it was surprising that the participants utilised solely the limited, collected materials that were old garment, and some woollen thread and pearls. This shows the fascination to utilise imagination with materials too. 'Useless' materials were rich and inspiring for the participants according to their feedback. There were strict rules concerning the working room and materials. If the girls wished to enter the room when none of the adults were there, they had to ask permission, because our limited materials and all the works the participants had done were retained in there.

There was an incident where a few girls, who were enthusiastic to draw and to make the creature, took garments, needles, which we had only a few, and threats to their own room and hid them under the pillows and blankets. When I went to order the girls to tidy up the working room, which was one of the joint duties, I noticed the needles and threats. When I told to the girls that I take those back to the working room, and if they wish to borrow them they need to ask permission, one of the girls got furious. In that moment I desperately wished to have a common language with her. I interpreted that she enjoyed the needling and making new creatures that much that she thought it was the only possible way to proceed with generally limited material: to take materials without asking the permission first. I bought from the bigger village needles and threats for the enthusiastic sewers for their own use.

The group of friends or strong characters may have influenced to individual processes of the participants. It can be noted that several of the creatures remind of princesses, angels and fairies, which are universal dream characters of young girls all over the world. A few girls took a model for their creatures from the wall painting, which presented a teacher. However the stories are all different, having unique and personal plot, all their own. The argument of Martin (2004) presented below strengthens the initial assumption I had in which the story is in the core of the process while other parts complete it; the feedback from participants support this too. Concluding her experiences of workshops where stories were narrated and utilised, Martin illustrates that a fairy tale opens barriers of understanding. It can lead to inscrutable paths. The question what is truth and what is fiction in fairy tales is inessential. Meaningful is narration itself, the process. (Martin 2004, 101.)

The focus is in the plot or message of the story, not in the language or grammar, which are guidelines in storycrafting method too (described in chapter 3.2). No one of us was native English speaker and the stories might have had another tense or a girl might have meant different word. Nevertheless these are minor issues in the whole process where being heard and seen are in the core of the actions and were achieved. The stories and drawings were planned to be

collected to a big folder to put to the library of the Peace Home. Thus those will be saved as memories to remember.

#### 7.4 Limitations

Different culture and different working environment are minor issues when I consider limitations of the project. Cultural aspects brought more learning situations, although it did not feel always convenient when the success of the workshop was threatened. In the cultural view point children are similar human beings everywhere regardless of the culture. The group size brought challenges for the working process to be present fully in each encounter. Thus the assistance of volunteers enabled personal encounters.

There are a few issues in the implementation of the workshop I noticed could be reformed. Those are strongly connected to actual limitation of this workshop, which I was from the very beginning aware of: the language gap. The lack of common language influenced throughout the workshop and made interaction fairly challenging in several occasions. However in its entirety I evaluate that together as a group we managed well. These following are examples, where common language would have made interaction easier.

I often noticed that a few sentences I talked were interpreted with several sentences in Nepali. I do not know if the instructions or idea changed through interpretation, but once the misunderstanding occurred as obvious. In the beginning of the workshop I told to the girls that they receive all those works for themselves. This I should have emphasised even more. After the instructions were interpreted this was unclear for some of the participants, as they understood the works have to be offered to me. Later a few girls disclosed this for me and I corrected the wrong information immediately. That misunderstanding was a reason for passive participation and lack of motivation to concentrate and to do well. After the correction I observed increasing enthusiasm towards working and completing each phase. This was a vital note to me for the future to ensure that

the participants understand the given instructions, in this occasion that they make workshop outputs for themselves. This incident could relate to cultural issues as well. I assume in Finland this would be opposite: participants keep it rather obvious that the works are done for themselves. For this reason I did not understand to put more focus on this during the instructions.

One clear issue that should have been done differently, which I noticed immediately when the first girl started present her creature in the exhibition, concerns the language of the stories. The stories were narrated and written in English that I am able to understand them and for the reason to make them internationally understandable. Those girls who could not narrate the stories in English utilised Nepali and they were interpreted in English and written down in English by the storycrafter. Finally for the exhibition those were written down in English by the teller for the final paper. It would have been better to have them written both in English and Nepali for the exhibition. Thus we would not have utilised interpretation again into Nepali in the exhibition and the girls could have their stories in Nepali as well.

### 7.5 Replicability

The Imaginary creature workshop has a universal character: it can be examined from both secular and spiritual aspects, because it does not have any religious elements in itself. In a term theology of helping (Elenius & Latvus, 2007) attention is paid to an encounter. Optimal helping is always connected to a moment where the love of God is manifested straight in love that appears in encounter of people. The encounter of human beings happens always in front of the face of the God. Being exposed to questions of another person and being consent for a dialog means that people are in that situation carried by the Holy Spirit. This has a perspective of the Creation. Responsibility of the neighbour is common; the border between secular and spiritual disappears there where two or three meet. Helping is dependent on this constant but surprising presence of God in interaction of human beings. (Elenius & Latvus 2007, 275-276, 282.) The arguments

presented above about the theology of helping support my perspectives. The faith is part of living everyday life, not a separate action; it belongs to the whole. Thus this workshop can be replicated in different places and environments, for example in schools, clubs, transit centres, and orphanages, in rural and urban areas, as CWIN saw it in Nepal. They aroused an idea to publish a booklet of the workshop, which I started to draft in Nepal, but this still is in process.

There were organised an additional exhibition for Fantasia World in CWIN's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, to where pupils from schools, workers from social service field, stakeholders, ministers and naturally the girls from Peace Home attended. The workshop and exhibition aroused interest among guests and received positive feedback. One Swiss man recognised that this exhibition was wonderful to experience because it offered him new inspiration and faith to his work. In his opinion utilising creative methods play significant role in empowerment processes with marginalised or oppressed people. One Nepalese social worker who works in Upper Dolpa, in extremely rural area, was interested to implement this workshop in those areas where villages are extremely poor and materials are extraordinarily limited. In that event new innovations were developed how to modify creatures and 'their lives and natures' further, for example how creatures could be used in a puppet theatre and new stories for the characters could be created in plays.

The workshop can be seen as a diaconal activity as well supported by the arguments of the theology of helping presented above by Elenius and Latvus (2007). It can be utilised to empower groups in margins in diaconal context as in spring 2013 when the workshop was implemented in Inari parish with a women's activity group of mental health and substance abuse rehabilitees, where participants were mostly middle aged ladies. The workshop received good feedback there as well, with different target group in different culture. Although the both workshops were implemented with females it does not require a gender categorisation. In the core of the workshop the idea is to be free from all the learnt categorisations by imagining "*If I could be anything I wanted to be..*". To play with imagination is not an exclusively right of the females. Instead to



play and dream creatively utilising imagination is beneficial for the development of children, and more precise, for all human beings. The workshop can be modified flexibly. A practitioner, who is aware of the wishes and needs of a target group, for example of male participants, can modify the methods to answer better for them.

The thesis topic could be developed further and it could be researched for example related to the narrative approach. The methods could be utilised as a part of narrative research, where data is gathered for example from life stories, diaries or letters. In the narrative research actors or participants produce data themselves and researchers attempt to understand actors and research phenomenon through analysing that data. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2012, 217-218.) The workshop has different approach where the outputs are not analysed; the emphasis is on the process and experiences that it enables. Mari Martin, who was also involved in Taimi –project (described in chapter 3), demonstrates her observations that even though the purpose was not to find straight connection of the fairy tales and own lives of the participants, she discovered that a child as well as an adult narrate something about themselves through fairy tales. In her experiences when a child told her fairy tale she placed characters, elements and incidents from her own life. (Martin 2004, 100.) When the manager of the Peace Home and the executive coordinator, who both are familiar with the backgrounds of all the girls, read the stories of the girls of Peace Home, they could tell that girls have brought their own life experiences in them. Creative methods could be developed in a therapeutic counselling aspect as also a narrative research, I believe easily, inside CWIN.

## 7.6 Role as a student but then a teacher, professional development

*In Pasthali Balika Peace Home. Thesis workshop about imaginary figure or fantasy character. Busy, busy busy the whole week, but so great! I felt like a teacher and I had my own 'office', the class room at third floor. (Personal field diary, week 45/12)*

Our study programme the Degree Programme of Social Services (DSS) aims “to train professionals who can work with marginalised and outcast people and communities in a society under constant change.” In the core of the study plan are the questions of poverty and social exclusion. This highlights a participatory work style in order to identify different kind of diversity and needs of communities. The aim in the community approach is to train professionals who are able to develop social services which encourage participation. This study programme can be complement with diaconal studies that have contextual approach to theology aiming to develop connections between community work methods and diaconia work in diverse communities. These both study programmes emphasise approaches to facilitate participation and empowerment of marginalised people. (Porkka, Kökkö & Pentikäinen 2013, 46-47.)

I felt that there was a good flow during the workshop as I had described the feeling enthusiastically to my field diary during the workshop process. The concept of empowerment should include social aspects, too (Adams & Robinson cited in Siitonen 1999, 94). Empowerment should happen in a dialog between teacher and pupils. Robinson noticed in his study that an open and unprejudiced interaction between teacher and pupils is meaningful factor in empowerment process. Especially respectful and democratic environment, open and reciprocal dialog in listening and speaking, humbleness and freedom of action have central meaning in both teacher’s and pupils’ empowerment. (cited in Siitonen 1999, 94.)

I felt that I am a teacher, having my office and everything. We talked about different roles with girls, how we all have so many roles depending on environment and social group where we act. I explained to them that I am a student having that role in Finland at the school. On the contrary in my placement at CWIN, and during the workshop I felt as a teacher being part of that community having my own space where I was in charge. This was professionally increasing my confidence, moving from the role of a student to the role of a teacher. The girls pointed out that they did not see me as a student, because they only saw me acting in the role the teacher. We were laughing together for how it seemed

so different to outside when inside of us hidden from others we all had doubts and fears how to manage to do our own parts in this workshop. This process was empowering as well for me as described by Robinson in Siitonen's (1999) study. Robinson describes that empowerment is a relieving feeling of own strength, competence, creativity, and through this freedom of action. It is a feeling that strength is flowing from inside of oneself and from other people to act and to grow. (Siitonen 1999, 94.) I am grateful that I developed self-confidence in this new field for me. The workshop was not only empowering experience in my personal growth but also in professional development as it was empowering for the girls. The reporting process complements and deepens the learning experiences with enthusiasm to explore and to combine the themes discussed in my thesis in my forthcoming career.

When I finally had a chance to implement the workshop in Balika Peace Home, and even though there were some practical difficulties and unclear situations, for example it was not sure if I reach the village and if I manage to find the material for the workshop and if there are any girls interested to participate, I felt the higher guidance was leading me to take the responsibility of the decisions for the success of the process. When I arrived to the Peace Home and we started the activities, everything was just *flowing*, smoothly but with a great speed, and I felt this was 'planned' by God, He gave the first 'permission'. It was tiring and exhausting week as a result of tight schedule, but the flow delivered strength. I prayed God every day to be with us and I can read from my diary how I was full of gratitude for Him being blessed with this great experience. It was a meaningful 'lecture' as well for me to trust to the process; to the same that I asked from the participants of the workshop.

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## APPENDECES

### Appendix 1: The creatures of Fantasia World



Picture 1. All the 18 Imaginary Creatures ready for the exhibition.



Picture 2. A few examples of the Imaginary Creatures, from left: Princess Meya; The Mother; Cutie; Lali;



Picture 3. A few examples of the Imaginary Creatures, from left: Buffee; Preti; The Scard too; Anisha;

## Appendix 2: The speech for the girls 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2012

'I'm so happy about the words and stories that you have shared. Beautiful stories, creative, lovely work, dolls, figures, I'm so amazed for the results.

I hope this experience of sharing something from your mind or heart is strengthening, gives you more strength to be what you are and to be proud of that. And perhaps to learn something new about yourself. There are many important messages in these stories that you share from inside of you so be proud of yourselves and your friends.

All of us, we have different stories inside of us, there is not only black and white, but all the colours of the world. Many times we just see the outlook, only the outside and we think that we know a person just by looking from outside. But there are so many of experiences in all of us, all the colours and those are making us beautiful and the person that we are. I am very thankful that you wanted to share some of those with me, and with volunteers (*names not published for ethical conducts, author's note*) as well and with your friends. I'm so proud of you as all the other girls too.

My hope was that we could make something soft and nice to hold, something for yourself to hold and take care of. Something that you can take to your arms when you want to share your secrets or when you are sad and lonely or when you just feel like hugging someone because you are happy and you want to show love and your feelings. And now my wishes came true. I am very happy when I saw how you love your dolls and figures and hold those. Your happy faces are the best results of this workshop, the best I could ever get!

Thank you girls, remember that you are beautiful and good from inside, never forget it and don't be shy or afraid of who you are, be proud of yourselves!

### Appendix 3: The stories of the girls in the Imaginary Creature workshop

The stories are published only with the names of the imaginary creatures and the names of the girls are removed due to ethical code of conducts in Diaconia University of Applied Sciences (author's note).

The Scard Too. The scard, scary angel: "The angel is flying to the moon, in front of the moon. She likes to visit the moon. She is always playing with the moon, because she doesn't have other friends. The moon is her friend. She is dancing and singing sometimes with the moon. She is always coming in the night, not evening or morning time. Sometimes she visits other places. When she visits other places she then returns back to the moon, because she loves the moon. She has two different kind of hands. The moon is always her friend."

Lali: "Her name is Lali. She always flies among colourful flowers and she also eat flowers and candy. She has a home in the sky made of flowers. Lali is always happy. She has many friends. No school."

Fary: "She is a heaven girl and her name is Fary. Fary lives in the heaven with her family. Fary wants to come and visit the earth because she always dreaming she come and visiting earth. Fary never see the earth people. One day Fary come to earth and she sees many things like different birds, butterflies, flowers and she feels so happy and joyful. The Fary visiting all place. And Fary see one old man and she that man asked who are you girl? And Fary reply I'm heaven girl and I want to visit all place but I don't know which way I go. Father can you help me? And the old man said of course! I have my little daughter, she can help you, let's come with me my home. Fary is so happy and she gone. The old man said his daughter and his daughter is very happy and she said ok father. Fary and the girls visit many place. One day Fary and her friend alone sitting and the girls said, do you know Fary we are so poor and my mother is death. And Fary said don't worry I can help you, I have a wish stick. Say what do you want and girl said make me rich and Fary success. And they happy. Fary also happy."

The Angel: "She is a angel. She is a beautiful angel. One day she is going to her friend and playing games, her friend is nice. When she plays with her friends she is very happy. They play with dolls. They are big dolls. The dolls are given by her dad for her birthday. One day after playing, she is sick, she has headache, so she sleeps, she dreams, she dreams of good things, and that she is not sick. She dreams that she goes to another place. It is a new place. She sees many different and new things like ocean and beautiful garden, and different animals. She sees a new heaven-angel, who is singing, clapping and dancing. In the dream my angel dances with the new heaven angel. Then her father comes in and wakes her up and asks: "What happens to you?" She answers: "My head is in pain." Her father gives her medicine -and after she feels better. The angel gets up and then she eats. After she plays with her friends again. Her friend asks: "What happened?" She says: "I just had a little headache, but now I'm good, it is okay!"

Cuti: "Long time ago I live in the heaven I live with my family. One day I go for a visit to earth. There are so beautiful places. I lost the way home and I live in the earth. I am missing my family. One day I meet with a small girl. Her name is Anisha. She takes me to her home. Family members of Anisha are scared of me because I'm not like a human. I feel sad. I come outside to the flower garden. In the flower garden I see my father. He come to take me home home. I feel happy and I go back home with my father. When I go back home my family member see me and they feel happy. I promise to my father not to go alone to go to visit other place."

Priya: "Once upon the time there was one angel. Her name is Priya. Every morning she gets up very early and goes to see her friends. Together they are singing and playing. She is really happy and she really enjoys being together with her friends. When the clock turns 6 o'clock in the evening she returns to her home. She eats bread and then she goes to sleep in her bed. Her home is very secret and nice. It is hidden behind a cloud, and she has painted it pink and blue. Most of all she likes to fly around in the sky. In all kinds of weather –

snow, rain, stars and clouds. But her favourite thing is to sit on a cloud singing and enjoying her life.”

The Big Garden: “The big garden is like a one place for far away in forest inside. There are so many friends in the garden, 13 friends in the garden. In the garden the friends are playing and they are enjoying the game they are playing. And their home is also garden. And they live happily. And there is a bee come to garden and they are also playing with friends. And the garden one friend is dead. And their friends are crying. One month later. Before also they was a happy play and bees also coming. The happy ending.”

Katatawoi: “She sleeps at night, wakes up early. She washes her face and then gets ready and makes the food. She makes the food only for herself. She makes the food for herself, for her mother, father, younger brother and a daughter. She then goes to work in field. She comes back from field work and she does her household works like making food and then goes to sleep. She wakes up early in the morning, washes her face and then she sweeps the house, makes beds,, then makes food and then goes to her work in the field. After she finishes her work in the field she goes back to her home. She changes her clothes and takes a shower and makes food. Then she washes the utensils, keeps utensils in right places. She then changes the clothes and again goes to work. Then she calls her son and

Son: ‘Hello.’ Mom: ‘Hello. Son, can you come to the field?’ Son: ‘Why should I come there?’ Mom: ‘You have some work so please come.’ Son: ‘Ok.’ And then he goes.

Then she takes her son to her house, ask him to stay and that she makes food, she ask him to stay with the daughter. Mom calls the daughter. Then daughter asks where is my brother. She tells that he is outside sleeping or watching TV. Then they meet and go and have the food. Before eating they wash the hands with soap and water. After having food they watch TV and they slept and they woke up in the middle of the night and they go to toilet. They came back and

slept again. And they wake up and wash the face, comb their hair and make food.”

Anisha: “That flower in the house. She have friend. She plays with her friend. When Anisha see her friend she was happy. She has many friends and play. My father and mother also like Anisha. Anisha was grow slowly and when she was grow she feel happy.”

Meya: “Thousands of years ago there was a very enemies between the heaven’s and the hell’s people. The hell’s people were really bad and they tried a lot to destroy the heavens people. But the heaven’s were really powerful, so they could never destroy them. But still they tried a lot but never could. But suddenly one day they heard that in the heaven’s kingdom there was a newly born baby and her name was Meya and that while she was just born she was not really powerful. So now the hell’s people planned to take away the newly born princess Meya and take the heaven kingdom’s happiness they had with Meay. So they did as they planned and became success in their bad plan. Now while the days went on Meya started to grow up in the cage with the hell’s people. While growing on she grew up like the hell’s people. She had horns, evil looks and dressed up like hell’s people. But whatever she did or whatever she looked like her real tattoo from her heaven family and her sweet loving shiny heart never made her far from her heaven family. But so sad that she could never see or meet her family. It been like 20 years that she hadn’t seen her family, it’s because she in a cave locked inside and was totally in the control of the hell’s people. But suddenly one day she got a chance and she ran away from the cave and she was out freely now she was so happy to go back and meet her family. Now she was so excited to meet her family so she rushed to go and she went flying so fast and while in her way she dreamed so many happy dreams and things she wanted to spend with her family and she thought that today’s the dreams she had dreamed all the 20 years she had dreamed would come true. Now she reached her place in heaven and all the heaven’s people started to run towards her when they saw her. She thought that they come to get her with happiness but it was not true. They were not running towards her with happi-



ness but they were running towards her with anger cause they thought that she was the evil from the hell who had stolen there sweet loving princess Meya 21 years ago, so now they were running towards Meya who totally looked like the hell's people but was sweet and loving inside her heart and was shining like the heaven's and was their own princess. But they didn't know her so they started to bite her. Meya tried a lot to say them that she their stolen princess Meya but they didn't listen her they just shouted her saying the evil girl and just bite and bite and bite until was in her last her last breath left and now all the hell's people were so happy thinking that Meya was dead and now while they were enjoying their happiness the kingdom's (Heaven) even heard that and come to join with them. But when they arrived there the queen ( Meya's mother) suddenly saw Meya with her family's tattoo and noticed that she was their sweet loving daughter who was stolen by the evils (hell's people) many years ago. She became so happy and run towards her where Meya was lying on the floor bleeding. Meya's mother took Meya on her lap and started cry thinking Meya was dead. And Meya's mother's tears ran on Meya's face and Meya woke up. Both Meya and her mother was so happy to be together. And all the people were very happy to get Meya back. And now they even won and destroyed the hell's people by knowing their weakness from Meya and All the heaven's people and the heaven kingdom's family lived happily long after with their sweet loving princess Meya."

"In my story there is my mother and me as a baby and my big sister. My mother is swinging with me, so I sleep. And my sister takes the flowers from the tree. The sister does so the flowers come down on me, and then I'm happy. My mother and my big sister only I'm crying my mother comes and makes me stop crying. They always hear my voice and sound and then and my mother and sister come. My mother also gives me milk. My mother and sister are fairies and they can fly so they can see me any time. My mother is a fairy-queen. My mother made the swing for me. And the swing I'm laying in is yellow, because the favourite color of my mother is yellow. My sister likes flowers and put the flowers on me. I only meet my mother and my sister at night time. After they take the swing down, and my mother and sister go."

Sarita: "Sarita. She is a teacher. She teaches English. She teaches in Shree Bal Adarash School class 5 students. She works in school's office also, she conducts the school assembly also. She takes good care of her home, son and daughter. She maintains cleanliness in her home with the children. She puts on the school uniform for her daughter and son. She takes her son and daughter to hospital or doctor if they are sick. She also looks after her own parents. She helps her parents to do work. She cleans her home. She washes clothes, dry them, fold them, keep them in their right places. She also makes beds. Whenever there are festivals like Dashain and Tihar she buys new clothes for herself and the children. She takes them to visit Kathmandu. She also takes gift to her parent.

Tara: "My flower name is Tara. When I put water she was grow was slowly and she make friend and she feel happy when she her friend she feel happy."

Buffee: "The name is Buffee, because some part is a butterfly and the other part is fish. I choose to do a butterfly because it is sweet and has a lot of colors, and it can fly anywhere. And the fish symbolises a woman in Nepali, and I like that the fish doesn't effect in any bad way. In dark Buffee gives light to all people in earth. She gives energy to sad people and to those who don't have any parents. She is like a mother and that's why all loves her, and Buffee loves all. All people is equal for Buffee, and she wants to help. She has a magic energy, the stars and moon give Buffee energy. The energy Buffee after gives to those who need it. Buffee has a blue colour because blue is peaceful and it looks like light. Buffee only has a eye, so she can use all her power on looking, she doesn't listen or talk, she only sees. Also Buffee has different different energy, which is shown by the many colors. The red color symbolises the blood, which Buffee gives to those who are sick, she gave to one with cancer. To the blind people she gives yellow energy, so they can see. Green color to the earth, where there isn't any food, water and in the deserts. Buffee is for sad people, people without parents and care, Buffee gives all energy so they become happy!"

The Gurash: "Gurash's home is a garden. Gurash has friends in the garden. Gurash is a flower. Gurash has been taken care of a lot and that's why she has grown bigger. She is a friend with other flowers. Whenever she sees her friends, she becomes happy. I and my family water the flower every day. Gurash plays with the friends and smiles all day long."

Beauty: "Flowers are the party colours. When human being sees it they try to touch me but I don't want to die. I want to feel to be free like when I grow in the nature. I like in short period but I give the different colours in the life to all. The things I have short time to give the smell and smile for you all so enjoy your life."

Butterfly: "Once upon a time there was one fairy. Her name is Preti. One day she wants to go for a visit with her friend. And her friend agrees that plan. After the time are going slowly. After some time the day they had decided to visit come and Preti woke up early in the morning and went to her friends place. Her friends name was Pratima. She calls her friend's name from the door. She said: "Pratima, Pratima, where are you? Our plan of visit is never going to be fulfilled. Pratima where did you go? How much I calling you but you did not hearing." Maybe she went to the market. At that time her friend came. Preti when you are come here in the morning we told that we went for a visit. "What are you saying?" "You didn't know that? Tomorrow we are going for a visit. That is why I came here." "Oh, I forgot that." "It's ok. You can come tomorrow and we will go there." "Okay. I will come tomorrow." "Okay. Now I will go home and tomorrow morning we will go. You eat your dinner and then you will come." "Okay, bye bye."

Cutie. The Friend I Will Cherish Forever: "Cutie is a very good friend of mine. I first met her as I was taking a walk through a park. She suddenly appeared in front of me & asked my name. I told her I was Sita and scarily asked hers. She told that her name was Cutie and asked if she could stay with me. I was happy so I told she could come. Then she came with me and became my best friend. She talked to me, she laughed with me, she was there when I was sad. She became my everything. She taught me many things about the world, about dif-

ferent games. One day, we were playing running cricket in the same park where I found her. There I met an old friend of mine. I went to talk with her saying Cutie to stay where she was and I would return soon. I came back in a while but then couldn't find my Cutie anywhere. I tried finding her everywhere but I never succeed.. I miss you my Cutie : ( “